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ISSUE 16//DECEMBER 2004//\$PRICELESS/=

## The Nintendo Story A Nintendo DS Special



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It's FREE!

Stand a chance to win copies of X-Men Legends (Xbox) and Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines (PC) Details inside!

# GAMEAXIS UNWIRED

## The Nintendo Story A Nintendo DS Special



### The GameAxis Christmas Buyer's Guide 2005!

Don't miss out your favorite Christmas presents inside!

Priceless Pokemon Tips!

More Pokemon FireRed and LeafGreen inside!

Catch Ninjas, Zangies and Arionos!

Red + Blue + DS

Super Mario 64 DS!

Our exclusive review on this first-party DS title!

WHAT THE COVER MEANT



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### Good things come in pairs

Creation has always had the quirky habit of looking out for symmetry. If you ever looked closely, everything comes in pairs – complementing pairs at that. From Men and Women to Light and Dark, the world as we know it has all the time been divided into two equal halves. Now, the powers that be has forged yet another symmetrical effort in the Nintendo DS, its clamshell (2 halves), its double screen and it has two more additional control buttons in X and Y.

What is doubly exciting is that the DS is Nintendo's first aggressive attempt in trying on wireless gaming. True they have started the campaign during the Pokemon FireRed and LeafGreen days with the wireless add-on, but the DS just brings it to another level where users can not only play but chat through its built-in WiFi support. Check out the route to success that Nintendo has taken in over a century to come to being known for its cute game characters and family-oriented fun (Famicom was made up of two words – Family and Computer, so go figure) in our cover story.

Besides the Nintendo DS, GameAxis December comes with a chockfull of features that will make you month of gaming even more fruitful and just like the mysterious ways of Creation, you have just got to take that first step and flip that page to find out. Go on, we dare you...



We got our hands on the DS for a quick run...

Jason Woo  
Writer

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### REGULARS

#### 04. Press Start

Kudos and pans – we have got them all and you can read the best ones here

#### 05. News Byte

Grab your nuggets of gaming news here!

#### 08. Cover Story

The focus of the month AND the latest coffee shop talk as well.

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Aww, it's the last page. We will miss you till the next month. But enjoy playing the games here.

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# Letters

Comments from the mailbox

Think you've got a bone to pick with a game developer for that insanely difficult game? Or just wanting to let your point get through to your fellow gamers? Maybe you just want to tell us how much we suck... I mean how much we rock? Send it all to [editorial@gameaxis.com](mailto:editorial@gameaxis.com) or join in the thousands of daily discussions in the GameAxis forums ([www.gameaxis.com/forums](http://www.gameaxis.com/forums)). And if we dig your hate/love mails or posts, you might just stand to win something really special from our friends.

## Earth is still the same...

I'm writing this just 15 minutes after completing Halo 2, hearing Master Chief say, "Sir, I'm finishing it." And I thought, "Yeah, another level!" Then the screen fades out to show the credits and I say, "What the hell?! That felt even shorter than the first one!"

I mean, we wait for more than a year scavenging the Net for every single detail and screenshot we can find and when it finally comes out, it finishes just like that! I think that Bungie should not have confirmed the 9th of November release date until they have made a perfect game.

If you guys at GameAxis have completed the game, I'm sure you'll agree with me. It's a great game, but hey, on November 9th, Earth still feels the same to me...

- Jordan Skadiang (email)

**GaX: Our sentiments exactly on this one but hey, although the ending was kind of dubious, at least we know that there will be a chance for a Halo 3 and that means more fun coming up from the people at Bungie! In the mean time, perhaps you can go challenge yourself by attempting to complete legendary mode on a pistol or something...or even hook up with the community on Live.**

## FF rants

Hi, GameAxis! I have been reading your games magazine and to confess I like the reviews on the latest games. However, something kept bothering me. Do you have any idea what happened to Final Fantasy XII?

Is Final Fantasy XII actually going to be sold in the market or is it still in the process of producing?

Alright, let's just move our perspective away from Final Fantasy XII for a while. Up till now, I still don't understand why SquareSoft decided to create a PC version of Final Fantasy VII and VIII but not that of Final Fantasy IX, X and X-2?

Is it because they had forgotten that some fans like me of the Final Fantasy series have only PCs and no PS or PS2? I just hope SquareSoft will create a PC version of Final Fantasy XII and don't make it an online one!

- Fan of Final Fantasy,  
Tan JiaJin (e-mail)

**GaX: Hi there, it's great to hear from a passionate FF fan. While it is sad that the great FF games are only found on the PS2, I believe it's not so much that SquareEnix chooses to ignore the PC populace, but rather it's the manifestations of certain key business decisions to market the games via the PS2 which results in symbiotic relations between Sony and SquareEnix. So the best thing is probably not hope for a PC release**

## The men don't get it...

Dear GameAxis editor,

Chanced upon this fabulous game magazine at my boyfriend's home and I found this magazine very interesting especially the article, 'Girl Empowered!!'

Being a casual gamer and the girlfriend of a guy who I think loves his games more than me, I can't help but agree with some parts of the article. As Singapore continues to progress, we girls are able to get into and enjoy what the guys had mainly for themselves over the years (read video gaming). However still, female gamers here are still being deemed as strange and even get featured on newspapers articles like some big society surprise.

Another point I want to make is that it is not that developers fail to produce characters that are attractive to girls, but it is due to the fact that we girls don't get so easily 'lured' like guys do to their virtual fantasy. So you guys do have your Lara Crofts, but if we really have to choose, we girls do have much more to DROOL about. Like men in armor? Master Chief from HALO fits to the T. Like stylish and cool dudes? Dante from Devil May Cry is one hot devil ~\_~

So, being smart gamers doesn't mean we are strange gamers, you see? That is also the reason why developers can't earn our money that easily and therefore don't tailor as much marketing towards us. Only through quality content then can they get a hold of our hard earned dough and not by throwing polygons at us.

Haha, ironically, I am back to being a normal girl (strange if you like) who wrote in hopes to win that Half-Life 2 which will make the perfect Christmas present for my dear boyfriend. :) Please tell me I did a good job at that.

- Aiwei (email)

**GaX: Whaddaya know, girl gamers are on the rise and they are making their presence felt. Long gone are the days when all girls did was to sit on laps and watch their guys fiddle with their sticks - joy-sticks I mean. Well, let's hope games developers are reading in on this and go away to make some really groovy girl games for the ladies, until then, there's always Samanosuke and a certain Jean Reno.**

**And awww...how sweet of you to write this letter to win your guy something; we will be happy to oblige but don't come bawling to us when your man spends the next few weeks with another bloke named Freeman rather than you.**



so soon and try to acquire a PS2 for yourself.

**Speaking of FFXII, it's currently still in the works and will likely to see release in 2005. No prizes for guessing that it will be for the PS2 though.**

## Hoping to see Gaming grow in Singapore...

Hi. I've got my copy of the November issue of GameAxis and I've been following it for quite some time.

As we all know that next year's WCG will be held in Singapore, it'll bring alot of advantages to our country such as our economy and all. It'll also bring to us more exposure to the other gamers from all over the world.

I do hope that the gaming community will be expanded not only through popular games and introducing more of them but rather to also include other not so popular games to get more players to play them and to also encourage them to get into the life of gaming.

- Bjorn Tan (email)

**GaX: Like you, we too are excited**

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

I really want to follow your story...

- A Ragnarok Fan (email)

**Jason: Thanks for your support and I hope you will also continue to love GameAxis as much as I do writing for it. The story will take some time to reach some high notes, so I hope you and other Tellerin followers will be patient. Meanwhile you should be getting your issue real soon after I have overturned the storeroom looking for that one elusive copy...**

## Gaming's next big thing!

Just want to sound out some of my thoughts on gaming, I noticed that last month's issue focused on 2 of the possibly greatest FPSs of our time, Halo 2 and Half-Life 2. It really seems like the game industry follows certain trends in the market. Just look at the great FPSs that have been out, like Doom 3, Tribes Vengeance and yes, Halo 2 and Half-Life 2.

All the gaming world needs is that one big game to make everyone sit up and notice, and soon more great games will follow in its footsteps. With the amazing Battle for Middle-earth, MechAssault 2 and others around the corner, your guesses are as good as mine! Yes, the future of gaming looks very bright indeed! Cheerios!

- Billy (email)

**GaX: Yes, Billy, any brighter and we will be blind. So put on your shades and sit tight while getting bombarded by fiery titles in this quarter and the next. For more information, you can check out our Pipevine section.**

## Free is good...

I was always taught that nothing free is good but you guys have proved me wrong.

Take the article on Half-Life 2 for instance, it has allowed me to have an idea of the requirements it needs and that is why I could improve the performance of my computer to get ready to tear Combines apart. The article on Halo 2 and some other games have also provided me with one of the best information I can get, which I can't get elsewhere. That goes to show how dedicated you guys are to your work. Keep it up. And don't worry I'll be one of you guys' greatest supporters!

- Ong Lin Teng (email)

**GaX: Thanks for your support Lin Teng. And you are right, free things are so much sweeter...**

## Next Letter of the Month's Gift

Fancy taking home a copy of Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines for the PC for free? Share your gaming thoughts with us and if your letter is the Featured Letter of the Month, we'll give you a Vampire: Bloodlines game - on the house!





## THE NEWS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN



Jay and Silent Bob

### Jay And Silent Bob The Game

Endorsed by none other than Jason (Jay) Mewes and Kevin (Silent Bob) Smith themselves, Jay And Silent Bob: Kicking A\$\$ will be coming to a PS2, Xbox, GameCube and PC near you, courtesy of a new software development wing of View Askew productions.

Said Jason Mewes of the game. "Yeah, this game \$#!@ kicks the \$&\*& out of ya! I mean it's so #@%&ed up, you'll be thinking 'man, I gotta' play me more of this #%\*#@ or else I'm gonna' kick someone's @\$\$!"

Kevin Smith, after stuffing a sock in Jason Mewes mouth further added, "It was a natural step for us. We love comics, we love movies, and we love games. We've done everything except games, so what else was there to do?"

In Jay And Silent Bob, a co-op two-player game beat-em up/RPG, players control the two super slackers in their goal to recapture store clerks Randall and Dante, who've been kidnapped by Mall Rats villain, Shannon Hamilton, to be voiced by original actor Ben Affleck. Initially being totally clueless as to where to begin, the duo start by randomly knocking on people's doors and beating them senseless until they give clues to Randall and Dante's whereabouts. As Jay and Silent Bob progress, their abilities will increase to the point where they can eventually temporarily transform into their super-heroic modes, Bluntman and Chronic.

Okay, maybe this didn't actually happen.

But it SHOULD have, dammit...



Xenosaga II

### Xenosaga: The Anime

Xenosaga, which is currently the reigning king of the PS2's admittedly small genre of SF-RPGs, has garnered enough attention for its in-depth story to merit a crack at the other much loved genre of Japanese geekdom - anime.

Currently named the oh-so-original Xenosaga: The Animation, the series will be based on the storyline of the first game Xenosaga: Der Wille Zur Macht, or The Will To Power. Big names tossed around for the development of the series include Hiroyuki Taiga (Mecha design: F-Zero, Transformers Beast Wars) Shigeyasu Yamauchi (Director, Knights Of The Zodiac) and Nobuteru Yuki (Character Designer, Record of Lodoss War). Footing the bill will be the venerable animation studio, Toei.



Morrowind

### Morrowind Goes Platinum. AGAIN.

The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind is about to accomplish something of a minor first; it is about to be released as a platinum title for the Xbox - yet again. Morrowind was previously released in 2002 for the Xbox, and received rave reviews for being a part of one of the largest single-player RPGs ever made on the PC. With a huge landscape, decent graphics for its time and a quest dropping at your feet every time you bumped into a tree, it was an offline RPG with the kind of content usually found in MMORPGs. Needless to say, it went very well for Bethesda and eventually the game received platinum title status on the Xbox.

This new platinum version is the same package that PC owners have been enjoying - the Morrowind Game of the Year Edition. This package includes the two expansions that came later, namely Tribunal and Bloodmoon. Tribunal took place in the capital of Mournhold for a little political intrigue, while Bloodmoon brought some furry, werewolf fun to the frozen isle of Solstheim.



Halo 2

### Halo 2 Sets The Record

The first 24 hours of Halo 2 are making everyone who is not in the entertainment industry pretty angry, as it sets an all time record of \$125 million dollars in sales on its debut to the world. This single-handedly makes it the biggest money maker in the history of entertainment, generating more cash in a 24 hour period than any other video game, book, movie or album ever made. Anyone who ever said video games are just kid stuff and unimportant in the grand scheme of things, is probably also wondering just how to invest in the market now that it looks like a bigger potential money maker than other mass market product.

In North America alone, 2.4 million games moved collectively between Canada and America, with numbers coming in from other parts of the world as well. This makes Bill Gates unnecessarily richer than he already is, and ensuring that whether Bungie wants it or not (though judging from the way game ended, it seems like they do), a Halo 3 is guaranteed to appear. Although whether this will be on the Xbox or its successor is a point of debate. Regardless, one of the richest men on Earth just got richer and with any luck, he'll put the extra money to good use by doing something noble, like buying the moon and turning it into a shopping mall or something...



Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle-Earth



Warhammer 40k: Dawn of War

### Star Wars RTS: Round Three

Lucas Arts has recently announced that, since encouraged by the relative success of newer games such as Star Wars: Battlefront and Star Wars Galaxies, they are going to be dipping their toes into the real time strategy arena yet again. This obviously isn't their first foray, since there was the ill-fated Star Wars: Force Commander back in 2000 to begin with, and a much better Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds in 2001. But there are two factors to consider. There's a new Star Wars movie in the offing, and with RTS games like Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War and Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle Earth coming out, there's money to be made here...

Says Jim Ward, president of Lucas Arts, "I think there's a bright future there for games based on these new properties, as well as original Star Wars games like a new real-time strategy PC game that Petroglyph is developing for next year."

Petroglyph is a small, indie development company based in Las Vegas, Nevada, so it looks like at least they're used to taking a gamble on things. Let's hope it pays off for them...





# Christmas MUST-HAVES!

The month of Christmas is here at last and to add to the festivities of Yuletide, here are some console gems that can brighten your days before Santa comes along and puts something in your sock.  
By Jason Woo

## TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2

GENRE: FIRST PERSON SHOOTER • DEVELOPER: UBIOSOFT • PUBLISHER: UBIOSOFT



The holiday season of 2004 will see yet another Clancy-branded franchise that will serve to satiate your hunger for military action right until when Splinter Cell 3 comes around. This time around, console fans will have cause for cheer when Ghost Recon 2 will be released first on the Xbox and PlayStation 2 before ending their tour of duty on the PC platforms next year.

Ghost Recon 2 on the Xbox will see players taking a team of four Ghosts into a war-torn North Korea so as to rescue a down Black Hawk pilot as well as to restore some form of order amidst the chaos. You can get to select from a pool of eight Ghosts each specializing in a particular small-arm or appointment like grenadiers and snipers. The Live format will be able to support up to 16 players on Xbox Live which will undoubtedly repeat the same level of success that the first Ghost Recon enjoyed.

## KINGDOM HEARTS: CHAIN OF MEMORIES

GENRE: ROLE-PLAYING • DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX • PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX



Serving as a link between the first Kingdom Hearts and the upcoming Kingdom Hearts 2, we see Sora returning with his entourage of well-known and well-loved Disney characters for yet another cutesy adventure.

The story takes place in the labyrinths of Castle Oblivion that Sora, Donald and Goofy enters after being led there by a black hooded figure (rule number 1: never follow strangers in games). Soon after the trio enters the suspicious structure, they are faced with a battle that saw their magic losing its effectiveness. This is because apparently the castle has absconded with Sora's memories and encased them in cards, which he must recover over the course of the adventure to have any chance of defeating the evils pervading the castle.

Filled with characters from both the Disney and Square Enix's stables, Chain of Memories is a joy to play and watch especially if you loved the first Kingdom Hearts.

## IRON PHOENIX

GENRE: ACTION • DEVELOPER: INTERSEV INT. • PUBLISHER: SAMMY STUDIOS



Iron Phoenix sets the player out on a quest to recover nine legendary weapons that when gathered will assured the wielder supreme status in the order of things. The unique twist to this potential sleeper hit is that it is one of the rarer fighting games that makes use of the Xbox Live connectivity and makes the gameplay all the more attractive and skill-based, since you will be mostly facing up against international exponents.

The key element of Iron Phoenix is the combat system that takes a departure from the usual button-mashing, comborific nature of fighting titles; instead the way to beat the game is to master the unique qualities of the weapons that you find along the way, as each one is capable of unleashing a particular unique strike that is especially useful in certain battles. Coupled with the fact that you can switch weapons on the fly makes Iron Phoenix a game with depth and replayability.

## THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP

GENRE: ROLE-PLAYING • DEVELOPER: NINTENDO • PUBLISHER: NINTENDO



Coming after Zelda: A Link to the Past is this adventure that stars everyone's favorite elf from Nintendo, the company that gave us a fat plumber in red overalls and a yellow electric rodent. But well, one thing that is in common between the three of these mascots is that they come in pairs, well, Mario has Luigi, Pikachu has Ash (or vice versa if you want to look at it in another way) and Zelda has, no not Link, but his trusty hat.

But what many may not know about is how Zelda came to have his hat which is a sentient being to boot. Zelda: The Minish Cap will serve to answer that bit of history for the fans. Battle through an extensive Zelda universe filled with mind-bending puzzles and scary beasts to search for the legendary cap. The game also carries some elements from the previous GBA game that saw four Zeldas in different colors. In The Minish Cap, players can also split Zelda up in different parts of the game in order to get around some of the more challenging obstacles that line the path of the pointy-eared one.

Zelda: The Minish Cap releases in January 2005.



## STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO

GENRE: ACTION • DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS • PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS



Some games just spell kickass all over and Star Wars: Republic Commando certainly nailed that compliment. LucasArts latest foray in team-based squad shooters has yielded this gem of a game that lets you play as a Clone Trooper amidst all the carnage of the Clone Wars. While your clone trooper does not do a Master Chief and save the galaxy, he will do well enough by leading a band of three others under his (and this means your) command. Together, the four troopers form the basic formation of a modern tactical squad named Delta.

Like the recently released Full Spectrum Warrior, players will get to arrange their squad into the correct formations before executing their next move and issuing right fire commands when they have to. However, the chief differences will be that there will be one less squad to command, cooler looking grunts than them US Marines as well as a far easier control interface that will allow for what LucasArts termed as One Touch Squad. This means that one button is mapped to several squad functions that will ease up gameplay a lot more and allow maximum game enjoyment.

The game is now in its Alpha stage and will likely to be shipping come Q1 2005. Look out for future updates right here!

### Here's a roll call for Delta Squad.

- Curious as to who comprises of Delta Squad? We give you the lowdown here.
- The squad leader is 38 and you the player will essentially play the role of this squad leader.
- Second-in-command is 40 a.k.a. "Fixer," an invaluable asset when it comes to the hacking of computer systems.
- 62 a.k.a. "Scorch" is the sapper who is especially effective against armored enemies while serving double duty as the team's source of inane banter (something like what Michaelangelo is to the Ninja Turtles).
- Lastly, you got 07 a.k.a. "Sev". He is the typical grouch in the team, serving as your sniper who can take out enemies without raising the alarm.



## RESIDENT EVIL 4

GENRE: ACTION • DEVELOPER: CAPCOM • PUBLISHER: CAPCOM



So soon after the Resident Evil movie sequel hits the screens near us as I write this comes a brand new installment that will still (despite the three episodes before it) scare you s\*\*\*less. This time around the story shifts from the undead Raccoon City to a remote European location where you play as Leon Kennedy, whom you sharp eyed RE fans would recognize to be the rookie cop in RE 2. The president's daughter has been kidnapped and Leon is put in charge of the case which brings him to Europe. There, he discovers a plot that is deadlier than a horde of flesh-eating undead and for the rest of the game, you have to survive onslaughts of enemies that display a higher level of AI and exhibit an overall better system of tactics.

Naysayers who claim that the franchise is jaded should really get their hands on this one and rejuvenate their views. Next to this, we say that DOOM III is really a harmless Halloween party.

## SUPER MARIO 64 DS

GENRE: ACTION • DEVELOPER: NINTENDO • PUBLISHER: NINTENDO



Whenever Nintendo releases a new gaming platform, you can be sure that a new Mario adventure will be in the works. This is almost as sure as Ash getting Pikachu on his journeys. With the DS coming to a good games shop near you, so is a solidly good Mario title – and this time it's Super Mario 64 DS.

To term Super Mario 64 DS as an exclusive Mario adventure would be wrong, rather, Nintendo has chosen to rope in every member in the Mario universe to celebrate the birth of the new handheld with two screens. Super Mario 64 DS essentially is a compendium of Mario mini-games that are both light-hearted and extremely addictive.

There will be 36 mini-games in all spread over four playable characters that include Mario, Luigi, Yoshi and Wario. In Super Mario 64 DS, you can expect to play games of chance like Mushroom Roulette and Picture Poker while a truckload of other games like Lakitu Launch test your skills and reflexes – and leave a smile on your lips.



## KINGDOM HEARTS II

GENRE: ROLE-PLAYING • DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX • PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX



2002's massive crossover between stereotypically sterile Disney characters and the colorful and suitably eclectic characters of Square Enix in Kingdom Hearts made sure that we saw Mickey and friends in a much different light. Game Director Tetsuya Nomura at the moment may be keeping mum about any new characters appearing in the sequel but present clips show that Mulan and the red talking lizard, no I mean dragon, Mushu will make an appearance in KH II that will be due on September 2005. Stick around here where we will bring you latest news about this game in future issues.

## EGG MONSTER HEROES

GENRE: ROLE-PLAYING • DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX • PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX



## VAMPIRE CHRONICLE: THE CHAOS TOWER

GENRE: FIGHTING • DEVELOPER: CAPCOM • PUBLISHER: CAPCOM



Whoever that is into portable gaming and says that he is not waiting for the PSP with bated breath is lying. Although it may be a tad pricey for a gaming handheld, the PSP comes with a chockfull of features that will make a Swiss Army Knife squirm. Basing their game on this exciting new Sony product, the classic Vampire Chronicle franchise is now being given a facelift and then some.

The fun just got multiplied when The Chaos Tower is also a game that supports WiFi multiplayer. Connect with your friends to fight it out with the game's large pool of selectable undead characters from werewolves to succubi and of course, vampires.

Bringing with it new battle combos and matchups, the bloodsucking theme did more than sucking all our money in the arcades of old.

Now, you need not take a trip to the games arcades for a round of this classic game. The PSP makes it all possible and you can play it on the go. Vampire Chronicle: The Chaos Tower is currently still in its final stages of development and will be in time for the PSP launch as well as to celebrate the franchise's tenth year anniversary.

### Game Maths



Part RTS, part RPG, Egg Monster Heroes lets you play as the Lord of Almamoon who can well, summon critters out of magical eggs. However, the continued peace that the land enjoys soon wears down the Lord's powers and the ministers got together and sought to send the young lord to an island where they can get him back in shape again.

On the way there, the group soon finds out that there is more than meets the eye to the veil of false peace that hangs over the kingdom. Although not much about Egg Monster Heroes is available at press time, it can be confirmed that the game will make full use of the new platform's dual screens as well as the accompanied stylus that the players have to use in order to move troops around in the mini-map, which is displayed on the lower screen.

Watch out for more details on Egg Monster Heroes the moment we catch any wind of it.

## RIFTS: PROMISE OF POWER

GENRE: STRATEGY • DEVELOPER: BACKBONE • PUBLISHER: NOKIA



If you have indulged in pen and paper adventure games before, you would probably have heard of the tale of Rifts. Created by Kevin Siembieda and appearing for the first time in 1990, it was a hit with adventure and role-playing fans for its dark vision of a dysfunctional Earth of the future. The story premise centers upon an unfortunate nuclear holocaust which releases a huge amount of psychic projections amidst millions of casualties. The resulting flux of energies tears at the fabrics to space and time and made if you will, a series of dimension tubes through which fantastic creatures appear unto Earth, a formerly human-exclusive playground. Rifts: Promise of Power takes place a full 300 years after the cataclysm and sees you as humanity's hero in facing off with the

varied nasties. If you liked the FF Tactics and Tactics Ogre sort of games, then this much anticipated N-Gage title will be well worth a place in the handheld's card slot as much of the game will be spent on moving units on a grid play map which mirrors that of the real world, so expect to battle it out on familiar locales like Toronto, China and Quebec.

### Game Maths







# The 100-Year Chronicles of Nintendo

• Text by Shoeless Wayne Santos  
• Art by Agnes Lai

## The Oldest Surviving Console Company Is Still A Contender

Nintendo. There's not a gamer on the planet that isn't familiar with the name to some degree. For some, the name represents some of the best gaming experiences they've ever had in childhood. For others, it was a name to envy since they didn't have a Nintendo product of their own. It is synonymous with Mario, Zelda, Metroid, and more recently, Pokemon, and is often regarded as a giant and a pioneer of the home video game console business.

It's also not doing so hot right now, but there's still a chance that the tides of fortune could change for the better. However, to understand why Nintendo is in the position it is today, it's best to look at where it came from and see the steps that have led to the tenuous position and risks that now present themselves to one of the last pure gaming console companies left in the current generation of games.





## Nintendo: The Pioneer

**B**elieve it or not, Nintendo is actually over 100 years. Nintendo as a company first opened its doors in 1889 when Yamauchi Fusajiro started the humble corporation as a way to sell his hand made playing cards (Think an early version of Magic: The Gathering) constructed from Mulberry bark. The game was played with a deck of 48 cards divided into 12 suites, one for each month of the year, with pictures like the moon, a deer and other iconic Japanese imagery. The game was called Hanafuda.

The cards, originally intended as a children's game or way to pass the time in the home, sold modestly well at first. Then things took a turn for the interesting when more enterprising types decided this card game would make for some interesting gambling possibilities. Much to Yamauchi's surprise, he suddenly found his Kyoto and Osaka stores running out of stocks. This was mostly due to the efforts of a group Yamauchi never in a million years suspected he'd get the attention of; the Japanese mafia, better known as Yakuza. As interest in Hanafuda grew, even the Yakuza got sucked into playing the game for high stakes gambling, and the tradition amongst professional players was to always start a game with a fresh new deck of cards. And in a huge fit of financial irony, a criminal organization made a humble card game designer legitimately filthy stinking rich.

So as not to disappoint his new market (And who could blame him, would YOU want to tell a Yakuza gambler you don't have any more cards in stock?) Yamauchi expanded his business, hiring apprentices and teaching them the tricks of the trade so as to mass-produce the cards.

## Into The 20th Century

Yamauchi was doing pretty well for himself. So well in fact, that as 1907 rolled around, he decided to expand his business beyond merely making Hanafuda cards, and exposing his fellow Japanese to the world of Western card playing.

He brought the conventional Western 52 card playing deck to Japan and had more success selling it than any previous attempts. This was partially helped by the fact that he had an understanding of business that pushed him to solidify deals in distribution. An agreement with the Japan Tobacco & Salt Public Corporation suddenly gave his products a chain of stores in which people could find and buy them. He was well on the way to founding the beginnings of a large scale multinational corporation.

By 1929 things were looking very good indeed. So good that Yamauchi figured he'd better get out while the getting was good and retire. Fortunately, he had a daughter who also married that year to a Kaneda Sekiryō, and the reins of Nintendo (As well as the Yamauchi surname) got passed over to Yamauchi Sekiryō. This new Yamauchi was now the head of the largest playing card company in all of Japan and the first thing he did was build a new corporate headquarters next door to the original. Things remained quietly stable and profitable for the next decade, as Yamauchi led the company through more distribution deals and expansions, selling more Western card game variants such as pinochle, introducing poker to Japan, and even giving birth to a son.

## The Current President

It was waaaay back in 1949 that a very young Yamauchi Hiroshi took the reins over the company from his grandfather Sekiryō. This was not entirely unexpected, since his father, Shikanojo abandoned the family when he was five, but nevertheless, his ascendancy to the Nintendo throne was unwelcome.

In order to consolidate his position, the new Yamauchi immediately took steps to solidify his acceptance. He systematically fired every "old guard" manager or worker of influence that might cause him trouble and installed new employees unquestioningly loyal to him. The rise to prominence for this company was about to begin, starting with a name change to Nintendo Karuta (Playing Cards) Co. Ltd during the 50's.

The 50's was a pretty busy decade for Nintendo. In addition to the name change, there was a reshuffling of resources, including yet another new corporate headquarters construction and move, and the consolidation of production plants in Kyoto. However, probably the biggest deal (literally) of Nintendo in the 1950's was an agreement with a certain American company well known for pimping a lovable mouse and a plethora of movies based on fairy tales to create a series of playing cards based on their characters. Yup, Nintendo hit the big time when they broke into the Japanese market for Disney merchandise. At this time they also started manufacturing their cards with a whacky new synthetic called "plastic."

While the 60's were fairly quiet for Nintendo, there were two major changes that occurred during this decade. One was that Nintendo finally became a public listed company and appeared on the Osaka stock exchange. The other was that Nintendo changed its name to what it's still known by today, Nintendo Co. Ltd.

## The 70's

Here's where things start to look somewhat familiar.

At about this time Yamauchi decided it was time to expand into toys. There was also some talk of exploring some of the more complex technologies abounding and incorporating some electronics into the toys. A lot of this innovation during the early 70's was the result of Yokoi Gunpei, who created a vast array of electronic toys, from primitive light guns to baseball throwing machines, to love testers for kids and couples. An alliance with electronics company Sharp helped Yokoi include solar cells that would detect fire from light guns, to create very basic light gun "shooting ranges" and really spearheaded Nintendo's increasing research into electronics for entertainment.

The 70's also brought yet another expansion of corporate HQ in the same neighborhood, as the company geared up for increasing production.

The light gun technology eventually led to simulate "clay pigeon" shooting ranges in unfashionable, abandoned bowling alleys, and from there, it led to a new game called "Wild Gunman". This was an incredibly clumsy and mechanical system involving 16 mm projections of people dressed up on cowboy costumes shooting at a player, but it was a huge sensation.

At least until the oil shortage that strangled Japan's economy and left people unwilling to spend money on these "luxury" entertainment spaces.

But then a funny thing happened...

## Television Games

Yamauchi needed something to keep his company going. After meeting with a childhood friend who was also the head of a big electronics company in Japan, he was told of an interesting new development known as "microprocessors." Yamauchi wondered if this ability to project images on television could be used for entertainment purposes and then found out that it had already been done. One American company,

### Timeline of the History of Nintendo



1889  
► Hanafuda cards



1907  
► Expanded into Western playing cards

1929  
► Kaneda Sekiryō take over company



1949  
► Yamauchi Hiroshi sacks old guards

1950s  
► Change name to Nintendo Karuta (Playing Cards) Co. Ltd



Nintendo

surprisingly called Atari, was already marketing such games in the American arcades, while another company, called Magnavox, was doing the same thing for the home with a system known as the Odyssey.

Yamauchi decided he wanted a piece of this action.

Nintendo acquired a license to manufacture the Magnavox technology for Japan, cranking out home versions of the ultra-popular "Pong" game for homes. But being dependent on the Americans for technology left a bad taste in Yamauchi's mouth as he wanted a proprietary technology he could call his own. So with no in depth knowledge of microprocessing and video technology, Nintendo turned to someone who did. Mitsubishi. And so, in 1977, the same year a certain young Jedi named Luke Skywalker took to the screen, Nintendo unveiled their very own video game console, going by the unremarkable name "Color TV Game 6".

Nintendo continued to pioneer the console system industry with a bigger, better model of their original system, called Color TV Game 15, which, like the original, was a monster hit. But an interesting new parallel was happening in another new

Robotron. It was Miyamoto, working on one such dismal shooter, who decided to scrap the entire project and work on a wholly new one around the insane concept that it would be cute, and would have the most unlikely of all heroes, a fat Italian plumber named Mario.

Indignation rocked the Nintendo house as the staff insisted that such a risky maneuver was a losing proposition and would cost the company millions of dollars in unsold games. Instead the opposite effect took place and Donkey Kong, along with Pac-Man, became one of the highest grossing arcade games in the history of video arcades.

Miyamoto had just sealed for himself a position as heir apparent to throne of Yokoi Gunpei and his work was only just beginning. He worked on more arcade games but his true calling would come from Yamauchi's next big project.

### The 80's And The Rise Of The NES

Yamauchi had watched with interest the console wars that took place in North America between the Atari, Intellivision, Colecovision and a smattering of smaller consoles such as the Vectrex and Astrocade.

He had also seen the attempt to bring home the thrill of the arcade on these machines, some of which even licensed Nintendo's very own Donkey Kong. He decided it was time to update the concept of Color TV Game series and follow the same format as these new systems; a central unit that accept ROM cartridges so that many games could be played.

He got his designers to work on a newer, more powerful— but still cheaper—video game system for Japanese consumers, a "Family Computer" or "Famicom."

When it was initially released in Japan, the Famicom was a massive hit. Then the Famicom, now dubbed the "Nintendo Entertainment System" or NES, waded into the failing video game market of North America and revitalized an industry everyone had given up for dead. It was here with mega hits like the Legend of Zelda, and the Super Mario Brothers series that Miyamoto attained his near celebrity status as a game designer, while other bold franchises such as Final Fantasy and Metal Gear started to lay the foundations for future gaming greatness.

This would be one of the greatest decades ever for Nintendo. Their dominance of the video game market was unquestioned, and would bring with it many legal battles, from Nintendo being sued for monopoly practices to Nintendo suing for copyright infringement, but all the gamers cared about was that a bold new game console had single-handedly revived the market. And it had totally amazing games to go with it.

But then Nintendo finally encountered some competition in the form of its fellow Japanese company, Sega.

### The Console Wars

As is the precedent in the gaming industry, a few years can make a big difference in technology, and Sega, who first dipped its toe in the console arena with the SG-1000, Mk II and Mk III, aka Sega Master System, decided to make a bolder attempt at stealing Nintendo's thunder. They released the MegaDrive or Genesis, a system that was technically superior to the NES in every conceivable way. And it started to sell like it.

**"...the biggest deal (literally) of Nintendo in the 1950's was an agreement with a certain American company well known for pimping a lovable mouse and a plethora of movies based on fairy tales to create a series of playing cards based on their characters."**

technology; calculators. Calculators had been getting smaller and smaller, and had started using a new Liquid Crystal Display, or LCD technology.

Yokoi Gunpei, now Nintendo's premiere designer, attacked this new technology with a passion and eventually released a series of new electronic hand held games he called "Game Watch", small, rectangular games with a single LCD screen in the middle and a directional control pad that future gamers would find eerily familiar. These games proved to be incredibly popular. So popular in fact, that burgeoning industries in Asia and South East Asia started producing cheap knock offs of the games by reverse engineering the technology, costing Nintendo millions of dollars in South East Asia alone.

This was offset by the fact that European and North American markets with more stringent copyright laws and more respect for intellectual property made Nintendo even more money than it had lost in its own region. Nintendo now realized that the future lay in video games and hand held gaming.

Nintendo as we know it today, was about to arrive.

### Enter Miyamoto

President Yamauchi, possibly hearkening back to the old days of the shooting galleries, noticed a new phenomenon in the world of gaming, and that was the rise of the video arcade. Not being one to ignore a potential new market, he started putting his staff to the task of creating new arcade games. However there was an unexpected surprise in the form of a rebellious game designer, a recent hire, named Miyamoto Shigeru.

The initial arcade offerings Nintendo produced were of the typical testosterone, death and destruction varieties; spin offs of previous games like Space Invaders and



#### 1960s

- Change to Nintendo Co. Ltd.
- Listed in Osaka stock exchange

#### 1970s

- Yokoi Gunpei heralded electronic entertainment for Nintendo

#### 1970s

- Allied with sharp
- New HQ opens

#### 1977

- Nintendo unveils "Color TV Game 6" that later became "Color TV Game 15"

#### Late 1970s

- Yokoi Gunpei releases "Game Watch"





Nintendo for the first time found its dominance legitimately and significantly contested and fired off its retaliation in the form of the Super Famicom, aka, the Super Nintendo Entertainment System, or SNES. They also diversified by paying attention to a market they had ignored for some time, the handheld area.

With the release of the GameBoy into a relatively empty market, Nintendo once again scored a monster hit, while at the same time battling Sega for the home gamers with new iterations of old favorites, such as the Legend of Zelda, Final Fantasy VI, and new series like F-Zero. While Nintendo's claim as undisputed king of the consoles had eroded, it still held a hefty share of the pie, and was quickly coming to dominate the hand held scene with its pioneer GameBoy, fending off attempts from Atari with the Lynx and even Sega with the Game Gear.

It wasn't in color—not at that time anyway—but the sheer volume of games and the fact that it was cheap, made the GB a winner.

Then things got bad.

### The Decline

Perhaps spoiled by too many years as the winner, Nintendo started to make bad decisions. The first sign of trouble came during a complicated series of deals struck with both Sony and Philips over a new emerging media platform known as the compact disc, or CD.

Originally working with Sony, Nintendo agreed to an alliance to produce a new CD based game system that was known as the PlayStation which would add on to the SNES. Later however, Nintendo would also begin to work with Philips on their new console, the CD-I, agreeing to produce Nintendo games for it. However, when Philips caught on to the previous alliance with Sony, Nintendo called off the effort and threw their efforts in with Sony.

This changed AGAIN when Nintendo realized that the deal struck gave Sony, not Nintendo, complete control over the CD based games and Nintendo once again, rejoined with Philips, leaving a bitter taste in Sony's mouth, and a determination to produce their own video game system that would remain under the name PlayStation.

This resulted in the now explosive debut of the Sony PlayStation, a system that for the first time embraced real time, 3D graphics and 100% utilized the new CD format, blowing away both the Genesis (which had its own CD based add-on by this time) and the aging SNES which had abandoned any ambitions to producing a CD-System in favor of newer cartridge technologies like the Super-FX chip (seen in Star Fox) and the ACM technology (seen in Donkey Kong Country) to consolidate their position.

However, even Nintendo could see the winds of change in the offing and they knew it was time to create a new system for the next generation, one that was twice as powerful as the 32-Bit systems like the Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn. That system, originally called Project Reality, was a Silicon Graphics behemoth with 64 bit processing that would eventually be called the Ultra 64, and then simply the Nintendo 64. But once again, Nintendo erred.

Whereas other new consoles had embraced the massive storage capabilities of CD, Nintendo steadfastly remained with the cartridge format, for the simple reason that

it made more money for them. In order for companies to produce games on a cartridge system, they had to use the cartridge technology provided by the manufacturer itself, in this case, Nintendo. Simply put, a cartridge system ensured that Nintendo received profits from both the gamers AND the game developers, whereas with a CD system, Nintendo would not receive this extra stream of income.

This caused one of the most surprising—and perhaps costly—splits of the 1990's for Nintendo, as long time ally Square, producer of the biggest selling RPG series for Nintendo, the Final Fantasy series, finally called it quits and allied itself with Sony. Their argument was that the epic scale they had in mind for RPGs was simply unsupportable on a cartridge format, and Sony was quick to capitalize on this with advertisements for Final Fantasy VII that had such headlines like "Someone Please Get The Guys Who Make Cartridge Games A Cigarette And Blindfold" and copy that explained playing game like FFVII on a cartridge would make the cartridge cost thousands of dollars, as opposed to the under \$50 it was selling for on the PS1.

Nintendo continued to plug on with the N64, however making the first truly smooth working full 3D game in the form of Super Mario 64, and releasing more legendary sequels to its best selling franchises such as Zelda, Star Fox and Mario Kart. The company was still managing to stay profitable, but had clearly lost this round of the console wars to Sony. They also stumbled badly in their attempt to create a 3D gaming system, known as the Virtual Boy.

It was one of the last projects of Yokoi Gunpei, who left Nintendo shortly after the VB completely and unequivocally tanked with Japanese and Western gamers alike, becoming one of Nintendo's most costly mistakes ever.

### The New Millennium Console Wars Round II

Nintendo was down, but not out. Bolstered by the phenomenal sales of the GameBoy and its various incarnations as GameBoy Pocket, GameBoy Color, GameBoy Advance and the introduction of a certain bunch of incredibly cute animals called Pokemon that entreated you "Gotta' Catch 'em all", Nintendo managed to maintain a very profitable profile, even if it was no longer even remotely close to what it once was in the console market.

They decided to make another go as Sony, Sega, and, in a big surprise, Microsoft, all readied themselves for the next generation of console wars.

This would be the round of console wars that would finally see its first casualty in years, as Sega, once a leader with the Genesis, finally bowed out of console production and gave up on the DreamCast, sticking to software development instead. This should have left Nintendo in a good position, except for two things; its own policy on software development, and Microsoft.

Nintendo's continued insistence on controlling its own media platform led to yet another proprietary mini-disc technology, rather than utilize the burgeoning DVD platform that had usurped CDs. Sony, which had developed the DVD technology, embraced it wholeheartedly and with a boatload of developers riding on the success of the PS1, flooded the market games in the tonnage. Nintendo had always maintained a policy of releasing fewer games at higher quality, but unfortunately, with the exception of 3rd party developer Rare, this usually meant only Nintendo games were any good and most other games were terrible, leaving Nintendo with a pitifully small library of "must have" games as compared to Sony.



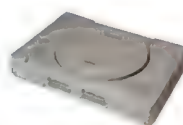
**1980s**  
► Miyamoto Shigeru creates Mario



**Mid 80s**  
► Nintendo release NES



**Late 80s**  
► Console War as Sega enters market. Game Boy appears



**Early 1990s**  
► Sony utilizes CD technology in PlayStation



**Early 1990s**  
► Nintendo retaliates with Nintendo 64





The other factor was of course, Microsoft and the Xbox. Using the muscle that only a Borg-like, super powerful, multinational corporation wields, Microsoft fought, bought or simply took the best technologies and developers its considerable money could buy, producing a powerful system with an online component, something Nintendo had thus far totally ignored on the grounds that "It would never be popular."

**"...the "Nintendo Entertainment System" or NES, waded into the failing video game market of North America and revitalized an industry everyone had given up for dead."**

And so the GameCube was released, and with it, Nintendo, once the king of the video hill and the last of the original video game companies still surviving, slipped to third place, after upstart American company Microsoft, and Sony, whom they had burned earlier by trying to deal with their competitors. In recent months, Nintendo has experienced yet another blow, when its attempt to breathe life into the ailing GameCube failed yet again.

This time from Capcom.

Shinji Makami, developer of the survival-horror series hit, Resident Evil, had once gone on record as saying that Resident Evil 4 would be a Nintendo GameCube exclusive, or else he'd cut his own head off. That being the case, the Capcom must be the only company in history with a headless star game developer as they have recently announced that due to gamer demands, shareholder demands (And, most likely of all, their realization of the tiny player-base for the GC compared to the PS2) Resident Evil 4, a former GameCube exclusive will now be appearing on the PS2 as well.

The GameCube itself continues with some life in it, but this is **ONLY** because of sequels to existing games, such as F-Zero, Zelda and Metroid. Unlike the Xbox which enjoys Master Chief, and the PS2 which runs the gamut from Silent Hill to GTA, Nintendo has yet to really enjoy a brand new hit just for the system, and instead relies on the loyalty of gamers familiar with the likes of Mario and Link.

### The Future

Nintendo, however, is not dead yet.

While it's clear that that they have lot of work ahead of them if they ever wish to recapture the console market, its portable gaming market still enjoys a level of success that is almost monopolistic. The advent of the Nintendo Dual Screen, or DS is making waves in the portable gaming circles.

Sporting on screen for display with another acting as a PDA-like touch screen, this is an unprecedented design that promises to bring a freshness and revolution to gaming that Nintendo has so far failed to bring to the console in recent years. It also helps that there's no real competition...at the moment.

So while the Nintendo DS may be the saving the grace for Nintendo, there is still the Sony PlayStation Portable, or PSP, waiting in the wings. Will it make for a start to the portable wars? Or will it mean the final nail in Nintendo's coffin? Only time will tell, but for now, the DS is undeniably THE portable gaming system to get right now. ■



### It's Nintendo DeSire not Dual-Screen...

The Nintendo DS – the object of desire of so many Nintendo junkies and handheld addicts is set to launch many hearts racing come this month when it launches amidst much fanfare, hype and anticipation. So what is it about the DS that inspires so much want and hoo-ha? GameAxis counts the ways...

**D** – It's **Dual-screen!** The first of its kind (amongst handheld platforms, that is) to employ such a technology to present its games. Now you can access maps, inventories power meters, score boards and more! This means no switching back and forth tables in the middle of furious gaming and that is really sweet!

**E** – DS also has a really simple and **Easy interface** to it. True to the traditions of a Nintendo handheld, the DS is home to just a D-pad, the start and select buttons; but instead of A and B buttons, the controls also introduced the X and Y buttons which are about all of the extra buttons on the DS.

**S** – Ok, we admit that we really find the DS **Sexy**. Yes, granted it is rather big but with all those features packed in, this little device cranks up the groove a couple of notches. There is also an attached stylus which is instrumental for some DS titles as well as making the device a sort of communication platform for you to scrawl your words on the touch-sensitive lower screen for all to see!

**I** – Long considered the bane of new consoles, the Nintendo DS does away the fear of not heavy a large library of games from the get go. The library of games for the handheld is impressive and features upcoming games like Pokemon Diamond and Pearl, Winning Eleven, Harvest Moon and more! The **Itinerary** is growing!

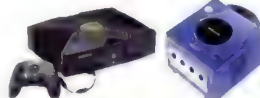
**R** – DS is one machine that is **Resource-friendly** and we mean it goes easy on your pockets! We hear it's going to be selling for less than SGD\$400 a piece but which wireless ready, voice-recognizing, microphone-input, touch-sensitive hardware really costs that little? One word, prepare for shortages once it hits Singapore.

**E** – It's also backwards-compatible which means you can still play your old GBA game carts on the DS! Talk about thoughtfulness. So at least you don't have to discard your Golden Suns and Advance War carts for new ones.



Early 1990s  
► Square joins Sony

Mid-1990s  
► Nintendo Virtual Boy bombs



Early 2002  
► Xbox appears, GameCube appears as counter move



2004  
► Nintendo unveils DS!



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PREVIEW

## ARMIES OF EXIGO

GameAxis takes a hands-on preview of EA's fantasy RTS that's bound to get all WarCraft fans' chins a-wagging.

PLATFORM: PC  
DEVELOPER: BLACKHOLE GAMES  
PUBLISHER: EA GAMES

The world of Exigo is set in a fantasy universe that will probably make even those with simply a smattering of experience playing Blizzard's RTS titles a little suspicious of where Blackhole got its inspiration from. In short, the premise of the game revolves around a world about to be torn by war between three factions: the Empire, the Fallen and the Beast.

The Empire comprises of races most of us recognise as 'good' or 'neutral', such as the humans, elves, gnomes and even dryads. Predictably, the humans seem to take lead in this little 'federation', where through a few cut scenes, we are introduced to the big kahunas who rule over the land, a council of magi presided oddly by a surprisingly young magician, whom naturally, some of these old fogies have reservations about.

It seems that the faction simply known as the Beast, made up of goblins, orcs and all manner of nasty things, are attacking villages for reasons unknown. What is

worse is that the Fallen, an army crawling up from the depths of the earth, a sort of a mixture between the Zerg and the Undead, are also nipping at the Empire's heels.

### Resources, resources, resources

What is an RTS without resources, and in AOX, there are three: gold, wood and gems. There is a fourth resource, which is food, but this you can get just by building farmhouses and this is your support system for units. Peasants gather all three, which are good for building structures and units. Gems give out magical energy which is needed for magical units and some upgrades.

The tapping of these resources and the building of structures and units are naturally different when it comes to the other factions. For the Fallen, for example, you create the slovenly bug-like harvesters to gather the three resources, but you will need two-legged summoners to summon structures (the way the Protoss probes summon buildings) as well as BECOME structures themselves when food becomes scarce. That's right – the way the Fallen support their units is by becoming unmovable structures. Luckily, you can 'unfreeze' them if you do run out of summoners, which was what I did in one of the Fallen missions, for purposes of rebuilding if you ever get hit.

### Pretty, pretty graphics

The first thing you'll probably notice about AOX is the pretty eye candy. One of the best looking RTSes we've seen (although it does look a lot like Age of Mythology), AOX features full 3D graphics with very proportionate, not-at-all cartoonish looking units and structures. Rain and spell effects are also impressive, particularly when you play the Fallen.

### Heroes of Exigo

And just like many RTS titles out there, AOX features its own set of heroes, which are predictably super strong units with super-duper powers. In the pre-beta version, I got to play around with Alric do Rei, the mysterious young magi, Lady Tierna, an elven noble and Keran Kessertin, a hero of the Fallen.

Naturally, all three factions in AOX have their own unique structures and units. For the Empire, you have your human fighters and pikemen, Elven archers, even crossbow men and magical dryads which can shape shift into very strong melee-fighting bears to help you beat down some very persistent orcs or plant all-seeing seeds to spot invisible enemy units.

At this stage, all we can say about Armies of Exigo is that it's going to be one of those games you will find hard to ignore, due to its beautiful graphics, the simple yet immersive gameplay, a solid story to its single-player campaign and not to mention, its unique dual-layer/level gameplay. ☐



## WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

BY JENNIFER TAI  
& KOON JIN JIN

PLATFORM: PC  
GENRE: REAL TIME STRATEGY  
DEVELOPER: RELIC  
PUBLISHER: THQ  
DISTRIBUTOR: NEW ERA

RATING  
9.5/10



### Army of the Imperium

To the uninitiated, the Warhammer 40K franchise is based on a universe that mixes fantasy and science fiction set in the 41st millennium. There are four factions in this war-torn universe.

First, you have the Space Marines, the superhuman guards of the Imperium who fight under the unyielding fist of the Emperor of Mankind.

These soldiers have had their organs replaced, are genetically modified, psycho-chemical conditioned, and rigorously trained – a regiment that would kill a normal human being. A Space Marine can fight without sleep or food for weeks, digest poisons, breathe toxic gases and can heal from grievous injury.

In Dawn of War, the Chapter of Space Marines we get to play are called the Blood Ravens, which is not to be confused with the Blood Angels, although one suspects that this 'new' chapter created by Relic will resemble the original Space Marine Chapter to some degree. Created specifically for Dawn of War, the Blood Ravens are the faction you start the game's single-player campaign with.

### Into the fold

The single-player campaign in Dawn of War begins, as mentioned, with you playing the Space Marines under the helm of one Captain Gabriel Angelos. Before this, for newbies and vets alike, you might want to try out the tutorial to get acquainted with

the controls and various units of the game. You may be an RTS expert but Dawn of War isn't your usual RTS because for one, there are no resources to mine – not literally. What you need are strategic points for requisition points and power structures. If this sounds alien to you, like I said, do the tutorial.

### Amassing your army

One thing RTS fans will notice that is different in Dawn of War when amassing troops is that you don't build individual units – you build squads. For instance, Space Marine squads come out of Chapel Barracks in fours and scouts from the stronghold in twos. With the right upgrades, you can also equip each squad with any of four types of heavy firepower: the bolt gun, the flame thrower, the missile launcher and the plasma gun.

Still, Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War is one helluva game. Gameplay is simple enough for the newbie, deep enough for the vet and after having been handed our arses back by the Chaos Marines more than once in the single-player campaign, we are raring to return the favor online. ☐







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# ROME TOTAL WAR

BY JENNIFER TM  
 PLATFORM: PC  
 GENRE: REAL-TIME STRATEGY  
 DEVELOPER: CREATIVE ASSEMBLY  
 PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION  
 DISTRIBUTOR: NEW ERA

RATING  
**8.5** /10

## Mix of real-time and turn-based

As in the earlier Total War games, there are essentially two distinctly different types of gameplay in Rome. First off is the campaign world map play (which I spent most of my time in) that bears more than a striking resemblance of Sid Meier's Civilization III. The gameplay here is turn-based strategy, in which you conquer cities and provinces, make improvements, and move armies around the map as you expand your empire.

Secondly, you have the real-time battles in which you use tactics and maneuvers to crush your enemy in combat. This is where the big deal is with playing RTW because here you basically control your legions to either defeat an enemy on a wide open battlefield, or besiege a town with onagers to break down its fortifications and basically wage a full-on assault to take it over.

## What a beautiful world

While all the hype surrounding RTW may be its epic portrayal of battles, one should not overlook the graphical achievements in the turn-based campaign gameplay. In a word, the campaign world map is a sight to behold. While you may not be able to see what happens in the cities themselves, you can see tiny little sheep from resource areas move to and fro allied towns while the occasional volcano erupts with ferocious might. During winter, snow covers most of Europe, which has an effect on units moving and battling in those conditions. I found myself automatically resolving battles most of the time because playing the turn-based campaign map is just so much fun.

That's not to say the 3D battles are not, for this is why there's such a high level of anticipation for RTW. The

game makes the transition from 2D to 3D from its earlier series very nicely, which I reckon tactical game fans will appreciate more than the average gamer.

Witnessing the carnage of hundreds of hoplites, elephants, Hastati swordsmen and the fatal rain of thousands of arrows, not to mention the deadly fall of an onager's rock, from a godlike angle (without lagging your PC), does give the gamer a sort of satisfaction (if you are winning) not easily produced when talking about a computer game.

Aside from the single-player campaigns, you get a skirmish mode and a multiplayer mode, of which there are essentially two types: a fast-paced skirmish game and a slower siege game.

Ultimately, RTW, with its deep strategic gameplay and exciting, easy-to-grasp real-time battle engine, you're talking hours and hours of sitting around and plotting – and this is just for the single-player campaign. I'd say this isn't a title you're likely to uninstall in the next few months or even up to a year. **B**



# STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

BY CAI JIAHUI  
 PLATFORM: PC  
 GENRE: ACTION  
 DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS  
 PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS  
 DISTRIBUTOR: EA GAMES

RATING  
**8.0** /10

## Use the Force

The single player mode comes in two flavors: a historical campaign, which consists of 2 further campaigns, and a Galactic Conquest mode which, like the title suggests, allows you to conquer planets. The historical campaign adheres closely to the films with a short movie clip prior to each level that advances the story. It does get a little confusing, however, later in the campaigns when you automatically switch sides just to better suit the story so you don't really develop any attachment to any particular side.

The Galactic Conquest mode, on the other hand, allows for more freedom of choice as you can choose the order in which you conquer the various enemy-infested planets. Controlled planets offer different bonuses which gives you an advantage in later battles and these range from an ally to fight alongside you to sending you to battle against severely weakened enemy troops. This mode starts off like a game of chess where you get a turn to select which planet to select and whether you get to pick a planet on the next turn or have the AI player attack one of yours depends on the success of your conquest.

## Force Fields

There are four sides to play as and each, in turn, has five different character classes with different weapons for deployment in different situations. This adds a bit of a strategic element to the game. Weapons that the units carry include rifles, grenades and of course, heavy duty ones like the rocket launcher to take out large vehicles. The classes include snipers, pilots, medics and engineers. Those familiar with first person shooters will recognize these to be the essential units in team-based shooters.

## Yoda Says

However, the multiplayer modes are still not without fault. For one, there is an unequal balance of power

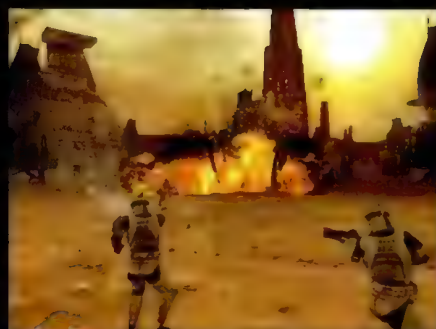
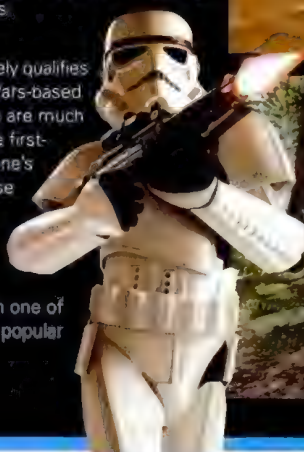
between the vehicles and infantry units. To put it simply, the vehicular units have a significant advantage in terms of the amount of damage they are capable of and their better defence and also, because they seem to spawn faster, you wouldn't stand much of a chance if you were to pit your foot-based troops against them.

The interface is quite user-friendly with the health bars of both your targeted enemy's and your character's displayed prominently in a non-distracting way. Switching between a third-person perspective and a first-person one can also be done quite easily. The controls are also quite easy to pick up, with the left mouse button controlling the primary weapon and the right, the secondary one.

The character models are also pretty detailed. Frame rate is smooth and quite a bit of action can take place onscreen with barely a hitch. Effects are suitably spectacular and you'll love the thrill of having various vehicles blasted into scrap metal by powerful-looking laser beams and explosions.

## Patience Young Padawan

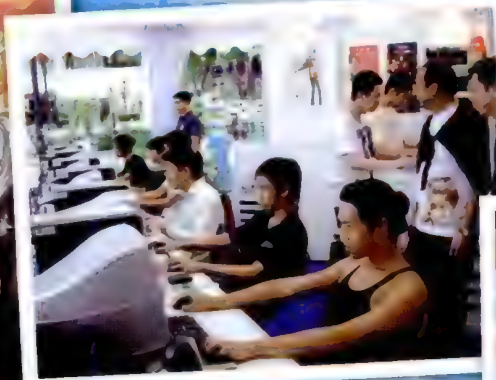
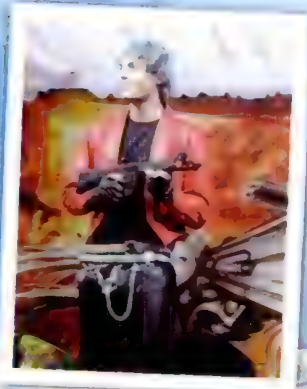
Star Wars Battlefront definitely qualifies as one of the better Star Wars-based games around. While there are much better games around of the first-person shooter genre, this one's particularly satisfying because of the characters featured. It is not often that you get to blast your way through the galaxy to your heart's content as a character from one of the most recognizable and popular film franchises around. **B**





# Vital Signs Hit Town!!

The 12th of November saw a flurry of activity happening right in front of Singtel's Hello outlet in Orchard as iGames Asia's first MMOFPS, Vital Sign, was launched with much fanfare and pomp along one of Singapore's favourite shopping strip. The game, developed by Korea's ChannelJoy looks set to be a massive hit with local gamers and shooter fans who have been starved of online games that offers the instant gratifying thrills that an FPS can offer. We bring you the pictures of the day's proceedings here.



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# THE SIMS 2

BY CAI JIAHUI  
 • PLATFORM: PC  
 • GENRE: LIFESTYLE SIM  
 • DEVELOPER: MAXIS  
 • PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS  
 • DISTRIBUTOR: EA GAMES

RATING  
**9.5** /10



## Livin' La Vida Loca

The open-ended gameplay from the original is featured once more in this title although a new twist is added. Your sims now go through six stages of growth – from baby to teenager to elder and will eventually pass on. Also, instead of having babies delivered to your doorstep, female characters can now give birth to them. The adoption service is still available though and you can even choose the stage of growth you want your child to be. To add realism, children will take on facial attributes of their parents and will maintain familial ties in the form of a family tree chart.

There is also a concept of paid vacation days which you can use if your Sim gets sick (yes, they get sick too!) or oversleeps. Another addition which goes to show just how much depth and detail there is in the game is that Sims can retire and live on pension or find a retirement job.

## A Simple Life

Time is a major concern in The Sims 2 and most of the game was spent fulfilling your sims' basic needs and making sure that they have enough friends to keep their jobs and promotions. All these have fortunately been sorted out in this sequel and you will have ample time to build up on your character. Instead of having the meters drain when your sim leaves for his or her job, some of these meters like the ones for bladder and hunger, will now recharge during working hours.

The AI in the game is competent most of the time and sims are less likely to do stupid things like wet

themselves when visiting. However, there are still a few patchy areas that need work in. For some obscure reason, sims can't sleep when their hunger meter is empty and they will tend to look for food in the kitchen. But because of their lethargy, they will collapse and fall asleep on the floor before they make their way to the kitchen. This cycle will repeat for quite a while until they have gained enough energy to grab a bite. I've also encountered situations where my sim couldn't stop bathing her baby because the baby's hygiene meter refuses to budge from the red zone.

## Who Needs Friends?

More voice actors are hired this time round for the character speech and although the language spoken is still undecipherable by us, non-Sims, it seems that more words are added into their vocabulary. Likewise, radios and stereo systems play a larger selection of songs and I wouldn't be surprised if some of them turn out to be actual songs from real-life bands.

The Sims 2 has definitely lived up to expectations. The game is flawless. It doesn't matter that there is some software issue that makes the installation freeze up every now and then on certain systems forcing it to abort. It still doesn't change the fact that this is a brilliant game that is a strong contender for game of the year.

At 4 CDs large, you'll need a lot of hard disk space and a considerably high-end PC to get the game up and running. Seeing how much of the material that is in the expansion packs of the original Sims is already included in this sequel, it's worth speculating what they can come up with in future expansion packs. The Sims 2 is incredibly addictive and unless you have got time to spare, approach this one with caution. **E**



# LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE

BY NIGEL YAP  
 • PLATFORM: PC  
 • GENRE: SIMULATION  
 • DEVELOPER: HIGH VOICE  
 • PUBLISHER: VU GAMES

RATING  
**6.0** /10

## Do I make you laugh... baby?

One of the biggest draw to the LSL games was the jokes which were peppered throughout the game. It made playing a loser like Larry less painful. Unfortunately the sexual innuendos and more subtle sex humour that was a staple of the title's predecessors have been replaced by pure dumb down crass humour. Believe me when I say it's crass. The "F" word is so commonly used throughout the game it's just tasteless.

Profanity isn't the only thing wrong with them funnies because LSL may have been all about getting a big laugh, but most of the jokes in Magna Cum Laude are stale. There ARE some funny moments, like a part where Larry complains to an imaginary producer about bad script writing (which is really true), but most of it just does not fly.

## Hoo-wee, I see ya babel!

Graphically, Magna Cum Laude has changed a lot since LSL 7: Love for Sail. It now sports a full 3D look instead of the cell animated or pixel animated feel of the previous LSL games.

Larry lives in an incredibly colorful world with really, really colorful people and the girls themselves are quite an eyeful, making them all pin-up worthy in a cartoonish sort of way. There are about 20 girls in the game and when you see them, well let's say Larry isn't so wrong as to go after them.

There's even a naughty and nude option that gets the girls going from lingerie to nothing at all. Of course, being an M-rated game, there is that one minor problem of the big CENSOR bar placed on the lower half of the body. I'm sure this is but a minor problem to some of our more 'innovative' (and imaginative) gamers.

## Larry Croft?

Typical of Sierra games of yesteryear, the LSL games were more of a puzzle adventure than they were action adventure. I remember the major amount of brain racking (with some walkthrough help) that I had to do to solve some of the puzzles. This is unfortunately lacking in Magna Cum Laude. Like its humor, the puzzles have been dumbed down to a set of easy mini games.

## A bad case of déjà vu

Magna Cum Laude has its moments but not many. A few laughs here and there, the girls, the ability to skip the really tedious mini-games and of course a cameo by the original Larry himself – that about sums up the highlights of the game. In the end, Magna Cum Laude is weighed down by tedious repetition, constant loading screens and crass, tasteless jokes. I'd stick to the older LSL games anytime. **E**







## KATAMARI DAMACY

BY ANDREW KOK  
PLATFORM: PS2  
GENRE: PUZZLE  
DEVELOPER: NAMCO  
PUBLISHER: NAMCO

FLATTENED  
9.0



### 'I felt the Cosmos'

The design and art direction of Katamari Damacy is distinctly weird but charming. The plot goes something like this: Your father, The King of All Cosmos got a bit tipsy one night and went on a drunken dance through the sky, knocking out all the stars in the process. 'I felt the Cosmos', he

confides. Afraid that The Queen of All Cosmos will find out about his shenanigans and banish him to The Cosmic Sofa, The King has asked you, The Prince, to descend to Earth in order to create new stars by rolling up objects with your Katamari.

### A game that flattens cats

It's in the simple gameplay that Katamari Damacy truly shines. Controlling the ball requires just the left and right analog sticks on the controller and you only need to roll over objects to get them to stick to your

katamari. Keep in mind, however, that the type of objects that your katamari can pick up depends on its relative size. Ramming your tennis ball-sized katamari into a watermelon, for example, would give a jolt that might cause some of the objects you've already collected to be knocked off your katamari.

This is where the game gets really cool. No object in the game is safe from being rolled-up; as long as the katamari is big enough, anything is katamari fodder. This includes live animals, vehicles and yes, even humans. And it doesn't just stop there. There's a sense of perverse satisfaction to be found in hearing the screeches of a cat getting rolled up, when only a few minutes ago that very same cat bumped you around like a living ball of string.

### Intentionally blocky graphics

The graphics are simplistic and blocky, and will probably turn off gamers who are looking for serious eye candy. Humans are built like lego-men but the simple graphics is probably due to a conscious effort

to give the game a unique look, rather than due to laziness. The upside is that the game scales well, allowing your katamari to turn into a hulking behemoth as the game progress into the later levels. The extra processing power freed up is used to accurately calculate the in-game physics. Rolling the katamari around does feel like rolling a ball in real life. If an oddly-shaped object like a pencil is picked up by the katamari, it causes the katamari to roll awkwardly until the dimensions of the katamari rounds itself up.

And that's the charm of Katamari Damacy. It's sucks you into a whirlpool of pure fun while you're playing the game. It certainly doesn't make the job of reviewing this game any easier so I'll just have to cop-out now and say this: trust me; Katamari Damacy is definitely worth the purchase if you're looking for a genre-breaking game that's additively fun and unlike any other game out there in a video game market crowded with guns and claymores. **B**



## SENGOKU MUSOU

BY CAI JIAHUI

PLATFORM: XBOX  
GENRE: ACTION  
DEVELOPER: KOEI  
PUBLISHER: KOEI  
DISTRIBUTOR: TECH PACIFIC

FLATTENED  
8.5

### Waring States

Sengoku Musou, known in the US as Samurai Warriors, is the latest in the Dynasty Warriors series and this time, all the events take place in feudal Japan instead of China (hence the 'Samurai' in the title instead of 'Dynasty'). The game features more moves, collectible items and features than its predecessors and an RPG-esque element is added to it for more depth in gameplay.

### Whack Whack Whack Whack

Each character has his or her pros and cons. Some have weapons that are more destructive while others have weapons that can attack a larger scope of enemies. You'll probably smile at some of these weapons used because they're just plain unusual choices. One of the characters fight with a fan, another with an umbrella, and yet another inflicts damages using this ball and yo-yo-like toy.

Button-mashers will love the game because that is what you will be doing throughout the game. There are combo moves to master as well and when you fill up the 'Musou' meter, you will be allowed to activate this special mode where you can unleash all sorts of powerful moves on the enemies. This is particularly satisfying to watch because of the special effects wizardry that accompanies every move.

### Hack Hack Hack Hack

The multiplayer modes are unfortunately, limited to just 2 players but it's just as well since the game plays in a split-screen mode. There is the usual versus mode where the players compete for the most kills, a capture the enemy mode where the first to get the said enemy wins, and a mode where

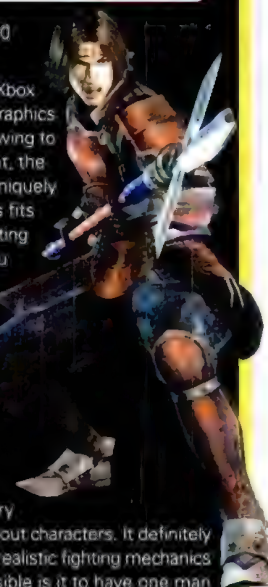
the first to dispatch 1000 enemies win.

Sengoku Musou for the Xbox has significantly better graphics than the PS2 version. Owing to its place of development, the game takes on a very uniquely Japanese flavor and this fits in splendidly with the setting of the game. Unless you are Japanese or are familiar with the culture, you probably won't understand some of the humor in the game.

### Slash Slash Slash

The game might not feature the deepest story plot or the most fleshed-out characters. It definitely does not have the most realistic fighting mechanics because well, how possible is it to have one man take on thousands and thousands of sword-and-gun-totting enemies anyway? If you're looking for a game that has the above, this one's not for you.

What this game features is fast-paced action and spectacular large-scale battles pitting you against the rest of the world. The same old gameplay formula that has won the Dynasty Warriors games a loyal following is still present in this outing. This is a nice change from the current spate of games that all claim to have a deep, thought-provoking storyline or some complex gameplay mechanics. **B**





## TERMINATOR 3: THE REDEMPTION

BY AGENTNINE

■ PLATFORM: XBOX  
 ■ GENRE: ACTION  
 ■ DEVELOPER: PARADIGM ENTERTAINMENT  
 ■ PUBLISHER: ATARI  
 ■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

RECOMMENDATION  
**7.5**

### I'll be back

The glorious cover art says it all where you see the menacing image of "The Governator" played with battle scars exposing his endoskeleton, a mini-gun ripped off a battle copter in one hand, a twisted torso of an offline cyborg in the other. Ultra-cool, and if that doesn't entice you enough to get this game, then hopefully this review will do it for you.

### "Talk to the hand!"

The carnage begins immediately thereafter when you leave the Tech-Cor headquarters and rampage relentlessly in post-apocalyptic Los Angeles en route to the time displacement chamber, laying waste to skinless cyborgs and hovering Hunter-Killers who dare to cross paths with you. A combination of run and gun techniques and fist fighting combos ensue, complete with snappy Arnold wit. Stomp on the body of a dismembered cyborg biting at your ankles and you hear "download this", greet them with a fist to the face and he retorts with "talk to the hand", each sound-bite satisfies with true recordings of Arnold's trademark accent.

The combos are simple enough combinations of the X and A buttons that range from the simple clanging headbutt to the slightly more complex punch combo. My favourite would be the one

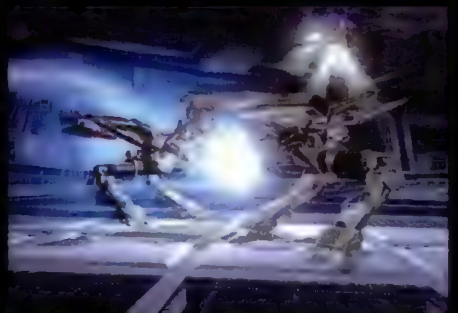
that ends up with a fist into the chest of a cyborg to rip out its battery heart which you can then proceed to toss at oncoming machines to a satisfying explosion. The right trigger button acts your primary fire as a targeting reticule floats on screen controlled by your right thumb-stick, while the left thumb-stick moseys your Terminator along with the left trigger acting as your secondary fire.

Much of the gameplay in present-time is of The Terminator in hot pursuit of the T-X for vice versa to thwart her attempts to kill off John Connor and Katherine Brewster. It is here where the gameplay is somewhat stifled as it panders to the plot nuances in the movie with one chase sequence after another.

### I know now why you cry, but it's something I can never do.

When you finish each subsequent chapter in the game to the very end, you'll be rewarded with a slew of cool easter eggs, from a complete collection of concept art, cheats and video archives taken direct from the movie.

Which is perhaps the reason why the game gets the score that it deserves, for even as it cleverly juxtaposes the plot from the movie in the game, there's also a killjoy factor when you take away the joyful exposition into the interesting post-apocalyptic environment where The Terminator can truly shine. If we could have had it any other way, there should have been a lot more of these missions that expanded the dystopian world that James Cameron created. The end product thus remains a satisfying romp highly recommended for fans of the movie and a welcome addition to the once floundering franchise. **B**



XBOX

## RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW

BY SHOELLESS WAYNE SANTOS

■ PLATFORM: XBOX  
 ■ GENRE: ACTION  
 ■ DEVELOPER: UBISOFT  
 ■ PUBLISHER: UBISOFT  
 ■ DISTRIBUTOR: TECH PAPER

RECOMMENDATION  
**8.5**

### Who Are These Guys Anyway?

You might be interested to know that Rainbow 6 is NOT a pure invention of video games, and that Tom Clancy is not some game developer you've never heard of. He's actually a novelist, who was formerly Jesuit educated, and had an insurance business with NO prior service in the military. This didn't stop him from becoming one of the premiere military/special-ops novelists of the 20th century, and now his novels can be found in any bookstore as the definition of a political or military thriller. Rainbow 6 is a novel based around the idea of a multi-national group of elite counter-terrorists from NATO aligned countries that run around the globe righting wrongs with a combination of military prowess, team work, and a bunch of nifty high tech toys.

### Take It Online

There are 10 missions to go through with you as "Ding" Chavez in control of three AI team mates. You can execute simple but effective commands like clearing a room (With or without throwing a flash bang in first) or securing hostages through a few

presses of the "A" button and directional pad. This is a fun enough diversion by yourself, but it takes on a whole new level of fun in Co-Op, either with split screen or a sys-link set up. When you're going up against the terrorists and you have a couple of friends backing you up, tossing grenades while you enter from the side door, the true beauty of the game really makes itself apparent.

On the multi-play side of things, all is well. If you loved the original RS3, you're gonna love this even more. New maps have been included that are bigger than RS3, all the original modes from Terrorist Hunt to Team Survival are intact, but there are also two new modes, Total Conquest and Retrieval to choose from. Total Conquest involves gaining control of a series of satellite transmitters and holding onto that control for 30 seconds. Retrieval gives your team the task of hauling a gas canister into enemy territory and dropping it into a box.

### The Final Word

This is a VERY solid game, if you're into multi-play. As a full game, I can't honestly recommend it, as it

was obviously intended to achieve it's fullest potential on Xbox Live, and so can't compete with Halo 2, which more or less nails every single thing magnificently, but it is a GREAT multi-player game. The various modes, the bug fixes and combat tweaks have all made what was a solid winner even better, so for you Live junkies out there, you know you want this one. **B**







# All I want for Christmas

**Text by Jason Woo • Art by Adelene Koh**

Now there's more to Christmas than wanting your two front teeth. Check out this droolsome array of gift ideas that you can shower on your family and that special someone without hurting your pocket (we are even nice enough to categorize the stuff in order of value). So whether they are gamers or not, there's always a piece of cool gear you can pick up for them in this GameAxis Gift Guide 2004. Happy holidays from all of us!



# BUDGET 2000

Long time no see! It's time to get back to work! The 10th Anniversary of the first Atari magazine is here! We'll be celebrating with a special 10th Anniversary issue. The issue will feature a special 10th Anniversary special double issue. The issue will feature a special 10th Anniversary special double issue.

## STIKFAS ACTION FIGURES

Express your creativity and originality with Singapore's famous stick figures made good.



## ATARI GAMING TITLES

\$549.90 - \$569.90 • [www.atari.com](http://www.atari.com)  
Spice up your holidays with a few fine Atari titles that will make your day. Buy them for friends to bring them more excitement this holidays.



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Use this baby to power up your PC to heights of performance you have never seen before

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\$569 • [www.ablerex-ups.com.sg](http://www.ablerex-ups.com.sg)

With it, you need not fear sudden blackouts or short-circuits. The Alerex 500 will prevent you the pain of losing valuable data and operability in such instances.

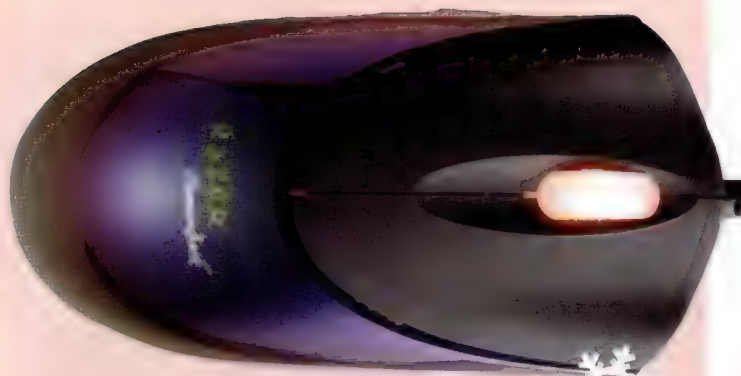






## ► RAZER DIAMONDBACK

Make your games count with Razer's latest in mouse technology. Now you will be able to rule your FPS games and make your opponents rue.



## ► NEW ERA GAMING TITLES

Gaming on your PC will be extra special this month with the entire range of New Era titles that will be hitting you by Christmas. From the sporting action of Football Manager to thrilling horror adventure in Vampire The Masquerade: Bloodlines, there's something for everyone.

## ► GUNDAM FIGURINES

\$519.90 - \$574.90

Roll out the big guns and mechs this holidays with Gundam figures and model kits! So who says Christmas must have much ado with Santa and his little elves?



## INPUT DEVICES

### ► BELKIN

#### NOSTROMO SPEED PAD

Control freaks rejoice as Belkin delivers the goods that will allow you to execute any game actions - with one hand.



## WATER BOTTLES

### ► LAKEN ASSORTED BOTTLES

\$519.90 - \$534.90 • [www.laken.es](http://www.laken.es)

With all that Christmas goodies, be sure to keep yourself hydrated. Laken has a wide range of bottles with different caps to suit the needs and tastes of everyone.





# BUDGET \$500

Able to spend just that little bit more for your family, that best friend or special someone but have no inkling of what to get through the entire slew of advertisements? Check out our pick of items that will put a smile on the faces of your intended receivers.

## ALTEC LANSING VS3151

Style with functionality marks the Altec Lansing VS3151 where you can enjoy 5.1 Dolby sounds with a pivoting center channel as well as six cool wall-mountable, shielded satellite speakers. You know you want it!



## MOBILE PHONE

### NOKIA N-GAGE QD

The Nokia N-Gage QD lets you game on the go while being able to communicate through its wireless Bluetooth technology. Fans of the WAP can also log on to the Arena for instant head-on competition with other N-Gage gamers!



## MEGA STICK 520

Listen to your favourite tunes while on the go and look stylish at that!



## PORTABLE USB STORAGE DRIVES

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SS229 • [www.kingston.com.sg](http://www.kingston.com.sg)

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SS435

Preserve your data in the safety of your pockets with these high capacity Kingston portable storage drives.



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### ABLEREX 1000L

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## WIRELESS ROUTER

### D-LINK XTREME G DI-624

\$189 • [www.dlink.com.sg](http://www.dlink.com.sg)

Get wirelessly connected with the D-Link Extreme G. This router uses the Atheros Super-G wireless chipset to boost throughput speed from 54 to 108Mbps. Eat your heart out, Speedy Gonzales.





# HANDHELD PLATFORM

## NINTENDO DS

SS28A • [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com)

Nintendo's latest handheld platform will leave you at the edge of your seat and humming along with its stereo music effects.



# WIRELESS GAME ADAPTER

## LINKSYS WGA54G

SS205 • [www.linksys.com](http://www.linksys.com)

Enjoy your games with an added touch of wireless convenience with the Linksys Wireless Game Adaptor! the Game Adapter lets your PlayStation®2, Xbox™ or GameCube™ attach to the network so you can get into online games without running wires to the game room. Or, use a pair of Game Adaptors to form a "cableless cable" between two game consoles for head-to-head gaming -- in the same room!



# GAMING CONSOLE

## CREATIVE ZEN TOUCH

SS499 (20GB) • [creativix.creative.com](http://creativix.creative.com)

Store up to 10,000 songs and enjoy 24 hours of uninterrupted playback life - that's what the Creative Zen Touch can do. Add in a sound quality that can match even HiFi speakers and you know you got a gem!

## PROFESSIONAL OPTICAL MOUSE

SS289 (with keyboard) • [www.gyration.com](http://www.gyration.com)

A mouse that needs no mouse pad? A mouse that does not need to be put on a table?? We kid you not! If you want to be the talking point during presentations, be seen with this baby, the Gyration Optical Mouse and be in the limelight! This thing is to be used and seen to be believed.



# DIGITAL CAMERA

## SONY

## CYBERSHOT DSC-P73

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Being the third generation of the Cybershot family means this camera has got all the good genes rolled into one neat package. The 3.9 megapixel with 3X optical zoom is a boon as well for casual photo junkies.

# GAMING CONSOLE

## XBOX

## HALO 2 EDITION CONSOLE PACK

SS349 • [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com)

Rid the galaxy of the Covenant menace with Master Chief and his big guns in this flashy Xbox bundle that will thrill any fan of this Bungie franchise.







#### PORTABLE VIDEO PLAYER

### CREATIVE ZEN PORTABLE MEDIA CENTRE

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Play your favourite movie files and MP3 files on this one stop multimedia platform!

#### DIGITAL AUDIO PLAYERS

### APPLE

### IPOD U2 SPECIAL EDITION

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## BUDGET \$1000

If a picture can say a thousand words, then the images that follow will be worth close to that. These items can be had for a little below a thousand, and you can put them on your priority list if you have got that bonus to blow.



#### PDA

### TAPWAVE ZODIAC

\$5525 (32MB) / \$5699 (128MB) • [www.tapwave.com](http://www.tapwave.com)  
Game on the move and move on the game with TapWave's Zodiac that also doubles as a PDA! Perfect gift for the busy but fun-loving entrepreneur.



#### MEMORY

### CORSAIR

### TWINX1024-3200XLPRO

\$5599 • [www.corsairmemory.com](http://www.corsairmemory.com)  
Looking for a RAM upgrade? These selections from Corsair will power up your needs.





#### LCD MONITOR

### ◀ BENQ FP71E+

S\$749 • [www.benq.com.sg](http://www.benq.com.sg)

Your eyes deserve the visual feast that the BenQ FP71E can provide. Besides great performance, it has the looks and that minimalistic charms as well. Form and function combined.



#### GRAPHICS CARD

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S\$640 • [www.giga-byte.com](http://www.giga-byte.com)

Enjoy an enhanced visual experience with this latest Gigabyte graphics card.



#### SMALL FORM FACTOR PC

### ◀ SHUTTLE XPC SN95G5

S\$699 • [www.shuttle.com/hq/](http://www.shuttle.com/hq/)

The Shuttle will complement your Xbox or PS2 consoles while giving the edge in gaming with its high-end insides that supports NVIDIA's nForce3 Ultra chipset!



#### BLUETOOTH KEYBOARD & MOUSE

### ▶ LOGITECH DINOVO

S\$509 • [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)

If you think Bluetooth is mobile phone speak for wireless communication, try including the technology into your keyboard and mouse and voila, instant typing without even needing to sit at the computer! Lazy people rejoice!



#### HANDHELD PLATFORM

### ▶ SONY PSP

S\$TBA • [www.sony.com.sg](http://www.sony.com.sg)

PlayStation has gone portable! Enjoy your PS games while being able to view movie clips makes the PSP one of the most desirable gadgets around.



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# UNLIMITED BUDGET



So we see you are pulling out all stops on making everyone around you merry. And if you don't mind splashing the dough, you can consider the following items. But don't say we didn't warn you; these cool babies are not for the faint-hearted nor ones with shallow pockets.

## NOTEBOOK

**ECG G556**

S\$1999 • [www.ecs.com.tw](http://www.ecs.com.tw)

Who says notebooks ain't for gaming. Power up this baby and set your world rockin'! It is also slim as well and can fit into any bag that you can find. Great for the travelling gamer!

## PROJECTOR

**NEC HT510**

S\$3699 •

[www.necmultimedia.com](http://www.necmultimedia.com)

This single-chip DLP projector pack 16:9 native resolution. With a 12000:1 sharp contrast, the projector is perfect for those movie matinees you will be planning.



## LCD TV

**VIEWSONIC N3000W**

S\$4999 • [www.viewsonic.com.sg](http://www.viewsonic.com.sg)

This 16ms 1280 x 1024/768 resolution behemoth is great for those console gaming sessions through Christmas nights and beyond.







# MARIO PINBALL LAND

BY SIM CHENG KAI

PLATFORM: GBA

GENRE: ACTION

DEVELOPER: FUSE GAMES LIMITED

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

DISTRIBUTOR: MAXISOFT

**RATINGS**

**6.5**

## And So the Story Goes...

A carnival has come to town, and one fine day Mario, Peach, and a truckload of Toads decided to check it out. The star feature of the carnival is a machine that temporarily turns a living being (I don't know if a Toad is considered a human...) into a pinball which a cannon then fires it across the skies, right into a bull's eye. Alas, it turns out to be a scam when the cannon shoots ball-form Peach right into Bowser's castle for imprisonment. So now, it's up to Mario to save the princess, only this time instead of platforming his way there, he's showing Bowser who's boss by doing it in ball-form. Control the flippers and blast through five worlds of interconnected pinball boards.

Along with the series characters come locales and trademark Mario challenges. There's an underwater shipwreck board inspired by a scene from Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga, a desert world with the inevitable pyramid featured in a couple of Mario games, a hilly world reminiscent of the beginning stages of Super Mario World, and many more.

The format of the adventure goes something like this: choose a world to embark on, and move swiftly from board to similarly themed board until you defeat the boss character. Each world has a starting board, and to get to the next board, you need to possess enough stars to unlock its gate. Every single board has an unspecified task you need to complete in order to retrieve its hidden star. These tasks are generally variations of kill-all-the-enemies-on-screen, but also include staple Mario challenges like a red coin collecting spree.

Overall, game developer Fuse did a good job of refreshing the classic pinball gameplay of high score breaking by giving players another motivation: to get to the end of the adventure. Grade 'A' for their implementation of Mario elements, too.

## So What Went Wrong?

Sadly, what Fuse did wrong was to make the pinball physics too complicated and frustrating. In your typical average pinball game, the trajectory of the ball is determined mainly by which part of the flipper you hit the ball, and slightly modified by the speed the ball was travelling at. To get more control over the angle you shoot the ball at, you could try to make the ball fall towards the left or right return lane, which cushions the ball's fall and makes it roll down the flipper slowly. In Mario Pinball Land, the speed of the ball is a bigger factor than the part of flipper you launch the ball at. This means that the ball may fly at dramatically different angles everytime, even though you had launch the ball using the same part of the flipper each time.

Furthermore, there are no return lanes to soften the impact of the ball here. As such, when the ball comes down from either side of the pinball, it rolls down the accompanying slope, gaining speed as it moves towards a flipper. At this speed, it is difficult to precisely launch the ball from the desired part of flipper. Sometimes the ball zips by so fast that it has already rolled down into the drain before you can even launch it upwards.

In short, the ball physics just simply feels as if the ball flies around at random. It would be fine if Mario Pinball Land was a normal pinball game whereby the only goal is to rack up a gazillion points. But it's not - it requires you to complete specific tasks on each board so as to earn a star in order to proceed to the next. And these tasks usually require very specific aim. For instance, one board requires you to kill three koopas troops before it rewards you a star. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Until you realise that each koopa requires two hits, both within a mere matter of seconds, to kill it. That's not all - the koopas are relatively small targets that walk around. Hence many times you'll find yourself missing them by just a tad bit.

## Worse GBA Pinball Game Yet

Sometime back, in an interview with a website, proud and outspoken Team Ninja head Tomonobu Itagaki commented that he could do a better job than Nintendo at making Pikmin 2. Well, I don't know if he can do a better job at making Pikmin 2, but what I do know is that he'll definitely be able to do a much better job at Mario Pinball Land. Heh, after all, Team Ninja are the people who made Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball - a game with an emphasis on ball physics and 'bounce'.

It's a pity, for Mario Pinball Land would be a great hit with its refreshing pinball adventure format had the gameplay physics been done right. As it is, this game just tests your patience. It's still playable - if you're willing to put in a whole lot of practise and retrying, you'll find a really cool way of playing pinball in this game. But what for? Sonic Pinball Party, Pokemon Pinball: Ruby and Sapphire, and Sonic Spinball are far better excuses to waste your life away on. **B**





EXCLUSIVE  
REVIEW!

## SUPER MARIO 64 DS

BY JASON WOOD

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS  
 GENRE: ADVENTURE  
 DEVELOPER: NINTENDO  
 PUBLISHER: NINTENDO  
 DISTRIBUTOR: NAKSOFT

AAVEE  
 8.0

### Missing...again

What's with the Mario franchise's obsession with missing people? Readers who have read my review on Paper Mario will know that the game is about Mario going in search of the missing Princess Peach. This time, it's the entire plumber fraternity that goes missing – shortly after paying Princess Peach's castle a visit after an invitation from the latter. Now it's up to the most unlikely of heroes – the green dinosaur Yoshi who must pull out all stops in order to find his missing friends.

The game starts you off as the adorable reptile outside the grounds of the enormous castle where Mario, Luigi and Wario were last seen in. Control-wise, the game is pretty simple to pick up with Yoshi having a set of really simple actions to execute. However, it is the often difficult camera angles that makes controls in the game a tad frustrating. The movements of the characters also takes some getting used to since the DS uses a flat D-Pad instead of the joystick pad found on the Nintendo 64 that was the first platform for the game.

### Touch me here, press me there

Pressing the Select button will yield the "Standard", "Touch" and "Dual-Hand" modes. Firstly, players weaned on Nintendo's previous handheld platforms will be most familiar with the Standard mode as it is the most conventional way of playing the game. This mode sets the controls entirely on the buttons found on the DS and does not really utilize the touch screen and stylus in order to move around in the game.

On the other hand, the Touch mode is perhaps one of the toughest mode to master as it will allow more mature users who have gained proficiency with using the DS's stylus to use it as the main tool of control. The stylus can actually allow only some limited movement controls to be executed (as the jump and attack movements are still governed by the buttons) but it can be pretty useful in maneuvering around tight corners and narrow pathways found in the course of the game. However, you must be really good with the tool so as to gain any enjoyment from it, otherwise, stick to the Standard mode.

Lastly, the dual-hand mode is probably there to facilitate left handed players as it basically makes the D-Pad and the ABXY buttons perform the same stunts while players will have to use the stylus to

move around. Believe me, the dual-handed mode is not for the faint-hearted.

### This is a very pretty game!

One of the new features with the game make one smile if you are up for some quickie fun, and not the long part of the game as Super Mario 64 DS comes with an obligatory set of eight mini games that will hold your interest and get you to come back for more. The eight games are divided among the four main characters in the game which makes two per character. These mini games are also kind of arranged according to each character's characteristics. For instance, mean and tough Wario gets two of arguably the best games if you are into games that involve shooting down things and giving out the hurt.

However, my personal favorite will have to be Luigi's mini games which are both card-based. The first, entitled "Memory Match" requires you to eliminate identical pairs of cards (that will flip over if you guess wrong) to win, while the other "Pair-a-gone" is a tic tag toe kind of game that needs you to clear a five by four card pool containing identical pairs of cards lined vertically, horizontally or diagonally.

Overall, the games add a new dimension to the title by giving it another channel of entertainment for people on the go. The multiplayer modes however would seem to be the weak link in this otherwise pleasant gaming experience. There are only a handful of multiplayer levels to choose from and the games mainly involves in a four player chase to have the largest number of stars, which is not very interesting but still does its job of providing that sense of novelty since it utilizes the DS's wireless connectivity.

For players looking for more meat in the multiplayer sides of DS, we say you will do better to stay tuned for future DS releases. But Super Mario 64 DS will deliver an astounding solo gaming experience, that much is for sure. This game is solid enough to stand on its own and does not come across as another weak attempt to milk the Mario cash cow. We say get it!





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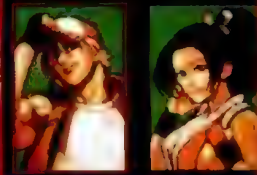
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GAME  
PREVIEW

## PLAYER SELECT



# KING OF FIGHTERS EXTREME

GENRE: FIGHTING • DEVELOPER: SNK PLAYMORE • PUBLISHER: HUGOBOY

When the game first appeared more than 10 years ago, KOF almost singlehandedly re-defined the fighting genre with its repertoire of stylishly designed characters, lavish set pieces, exciting and unforgettable boss battles and a certain sense of epic-ness in its storyline. Besides the obvious aesthetics, KOF is also one of those type of games that you will either love it for its complexities in both its gameplay and control or you will hate it by labeling the aforementioned two qualities as being clunky and a bane for new players.

Regardless of how you feel about the series, you could do well to try out King of Fighters Extreme and let the game speak for itself. However, that's not to say that the controls for the game has been watered down a lot to suit more general tastes. Instead, King of Fighters Extreme retains everything (including the tough controls) that has made this series great, the only difference is that it can now be played on a mobile phone!

King of Fighters Extreme on the N-Gage now has nine buttons mapped for taunts, rolls, and charge-ups. While these actions may have required systematic and ordered button presses on the arcade machines to perform, the N-Gage uses specific buttons to perform these actions instead, thus negating the need for unnecessary button mashing – something you probably don't want to do on the handheld's densely arranged set of buttons.

Just like the brawling original, King of Fighters Extreme features the Striker system that NeoGeo introduced in the 1999 KOF game. Players still get to fight it out in teams of threes but by pressing the '2' button, they can call out a team member to land a sucker punch on your unsuspecting foes. This feature that has added depth to the overall gameplay in KOF is a welcome delight in this handheld version.

BY JASON WOO

# OPERATION SHADOW

GENRE: ACTION • DEVELOPER: TORUS GAMES • PUBLISHER: NOKIA

 RATING  
4.0

BY JASON WOO



Now, why did we think that Operation Shadow was potentially something new to offer as an FPS title on the Nokia handheld? Well, the good thing about Operation Shadow was its snappy pacing – Operation Shadow in all its glory is a no holds barred, throw the plot out of the window kind of shooter that you can spend some good minutes with on that boring bus ride. But after you have combed through a few moments with the game, you will find that Operation Shadow offers none of what the other shooters on the handheld can and that is the feeling of satisfaction and reward for good play.

In Operation Shadow, the fast-paced gameplay is both its strong point and weakness. The plot just doesn't allow you to delve deeper other than letting you know that you are Jay (no, not the Taiwanese singer) a brutish counterterrorist soldier with a penchant for violent measures to end conflicts. Being the damage dealing behemoth that he is, Jay is consequently sent across the globe in an international anti-terror rampage.

However, Operation Shadow is such an inherently bad game in terms of design that we really have to struggle to find its redeeming qualities and we found that despite all the misgivings we had about it, Operation Shadow actually features one of the better soundtracks around. The game is chiefly made up of upbeat tempo ditties that serve to enhance the militaristic mood of the game and does generally complements the game with being bothersome and irritating like some other game music that we have heard. So kudos have to be given to the developers for that.

However, a good soundtrack does not make a good game and Operation Shadow is best seen as a good example of a shooter gone bad. It is really too bad because we initially felt that the game harbored much potential and could really do better if the aforementioned flaws were addressed during development and the game could have been a 6 / 10 instead of the barely there 4.

# A Year On...

We here at GameAxis shall follow the age-old tradition of celebrating first birthdays of game decks. We've compiled a 'Best Of' list of games to honor the games that have glorified the good name of the N-Gage; games that might make gamers consider the purchase of an N-Gage; games that N-Gage owners will want in their collections. **By Cai Jia Hui**

## 5 of the Best



### THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

Everyone should be familiar with the series by now. Maxis seems to be churning out Sims games like there's no tomorrow but that's not a bad thing at all. The games of the series are all consistently good and this one's no exception.

Great for playing on the train or in the bus, having the Sims on your handphone sure is without a doubt, way cooler than carrying a Digimon around.



### ASHEN

Why Ashen instead of say, Red Faction? Because this is the first FPS that is released exclusively on the N-Gage and if nothing else, that's enough to gain it quite a bit of respect.

Technical issues like that aside, the game has a intriguing plot that centres around the mysterious disappearance of the people in a town. Atmospheric graphics and a moody soundtrack further compliment the horror theme of the game and make for riveting gameplay.



### TONY HAWK PRO SKATER

Ever since the first Tony Hawk took the gaming world by storm, it has become procedural for new consoles to have a version of the game. Unlike the initial Gameboy release, this one's in full 3D glory.

Along with the hip-hop and rock music that is synonymous with the series, also present in this N-Gage version are a number of 2-player modes that can be played via the Bluetooth connection. Despite being one of the first games for the N-Gage, Tony Hawk Pro Skater still remains the most playable one to date.



### RAYMAN 3

Rayman is one of the most endearing video game characters in recent years. Who can resist that floppy fringe and toothy grin? Another early title, Rayman 3 bears the style of the first in the series and is similarly addictive.

This is a side-scrolling platformer like those from the SNES days and such a style works great on the N-Gage's tiny screen. The cheery bright visuals and the happy songs complete the old-school style and surely there are enough of you out there who have a soft spot for games like these.



### PANDEMONIUM

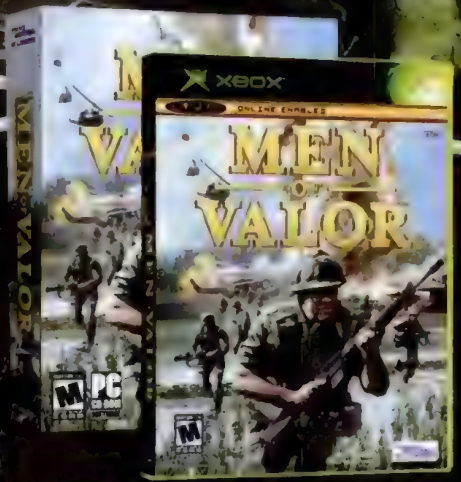
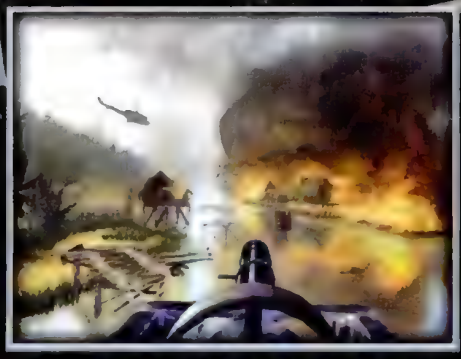
Now the inclusion of Pandemonium is quite debatable. Some people liked it, some people don't. Some people haven't even heard of it so why this game? Well, the reason why it's here is because this is such an underrated and low profile title that nobody really expects much from it. However, contrast this to big-name titles where everyone is confident it would at least be of some standard (more on this later) but the truth proves to be otherwise.

Pandemonium was first released on the PlayStation platform and despite its lack of commercial success, it gained quite a loyal following. The game is funny and at times just plain strange. Graphics are spectacular and the environments are just beautiful.



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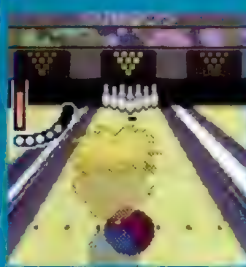


# Action on the palm of your hand!

This month, we bring you into the world of sequels that actually do good besides your Half-Lives and Halos. If you like games that makes you build your ultimate character from scratch, we have Com2Us Bowling 2 and Project Supermodel 2 to quench your role-playing cravings and if you fancy a trip to high fantasy and the indispensable action thrillers, DragonFire 2 and Commando: Guerilla Jungle will surely make your day and your bus/MRT/cab trip more pleasant. **By Jason Woo**

## COM2US BOWLING 2

RATING  
**8.5** /10



### This one is a strike!

The sequel to the original Com2Us Bowling features more than just serving up more helpings of bowling goodness; this installment lets you try your hand out in creating a proficient bowler as the game draws on. You may say that this is in actuality the Career mode that is the staple of sport games, Bowling 2 actually does away with the option to play a Career mode and lets you in immediately to the world of smashing ten pins. But before you start to get your strikes, you will have to select a male or female avatar to go through the game's training mode, once you clear the initiation rounds, you will be awarded points to upgrade your bowler in areas like their power stats or even get that new ball to further your championship dreams.

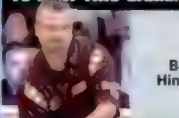
### OUR LOVE:

→ I love the game because it's so addictive and you can play it anytime, anywhere. I love the graphics and the sound effects. I love the game because it's so addictive and you can play it anytime, anywhere. I love the graphics and the sound effects.

### OUR GRIPES:

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### CELEBRITY MOST LIKELY TO PLAY THIS GAME:



Brian Himmier

### CELEBRITY LEAST LIKELY TO PLAY THIS GAME:



Homer Simpson

Now he must prove whether he can do virtual bowl as well as he does in real life.

The only bowl he knows is his Super Bowl.

## DRAGONFIRE 2: SPACE TIME TRAVEL

RATING  
**9.0** /10

GENRE: VERTICAL SHOOTER



### Dragon Rage!

The Amond Empire is under attack from the evil Cara Empire (cue The Imperial Match) and Lady Amond is left with no choice but to attempt a risky trip on the time machine to pre-war Amond and try to rally her people before the onslaught happens. However, as you would have it, the time machine fails and crash-lands on Earth (continuity buffs would scream murder but it's a game for crying out loud).

Unbeknownst to the heroine, the Earth's native race of dragons is under attack from the nefarious Cara Empire as well and the dragon king, Feanon allies himself with Amond in a move to fulfill ancient prophecy!

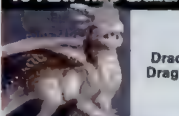
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### CELEBRITY MOST LIKELY TO PLAY THIS GAME:



Draco from Dragonheart

### CELEBRITY LEAST LIKELY TO PLAY THIS GAME:



The Dragonflyz

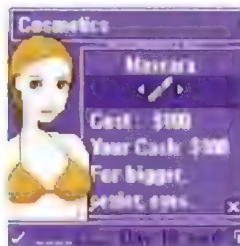
We can almost picture Sean Connery voicing as Feanon if the game makes it big.

They don't play dragon games.

## PROJECT SUPERMODEL 2

GENRE: MANAGEMENT SIM

RATING  
**8.5** /10



### Excuse me, are you a model?

If you have watched America's Next Top Model, you will understand just how addictive that show can be as you race home to catch how the model wannabes cry themselves silly over the sheer bitchiness of the judges and the crazy projects that the catwalk incumbents would have to undertake so that you can see their face again in the next episode.

SL Interactive's Project Supermodel 2 allows you to embark on yet another open-ended game that will grow in different ways each time you try a different route. The game places you in the shoes of Cecil whose dreams to be a top class clothes rack are in your hands. Develop traits like poise, skin and figure over the course of the game and be the focus of every young girl.

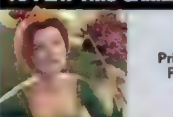
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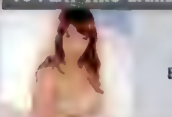
### CELEBRITY MOST LIKELY TO PLAY THIS GAME:



Princess Fiona

Looking pretty even in green.

### CELEBRITY LEAST LIKELY TO PLAY THIS GAME:



Tyra Banks

Mocking real wannabes is more her thing.

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW!

## CLUB IDOL

GENRE: MANAGEMENT SIM

RATING  
**8.0** /10

Following the trend set by their earlier sim involving making sweet pretty things famous, SL Interactive once again rolls out a delectable title in Club Idol that puts you in the role of Ariel, an aspiring singer who still needs lots of work, and there's where you come in.



Host: 'Please come back some time later'

As you travel in Ariel's world, you will soon learn that the route to stardom is not a smooth one as you must carry out numerous tasks before you can attain that elusive dream. Club Idol is filled with some elements of the RPG genre as well like fetch quests or simply finding that particular item that will move you along the story. Given that it's a preview build, Club Idol is shaping up to be a pretty fun game if you go light on the graphics which is not that impressive but does a satisfactory job of complimenting the game.

### OUR LOVE:

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### CELEBRITY MOST LIKELY TO PLAY THIS GAME:



The Banana man

He needs a guide on how to make it in idol shows.

### CELEBRITY LEAST LIKELY TO PLAY THIS GAME:



Maia Lee

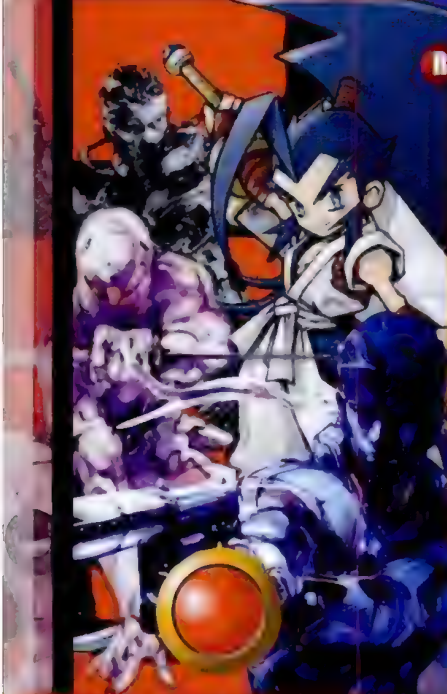
One of close but not close enough.



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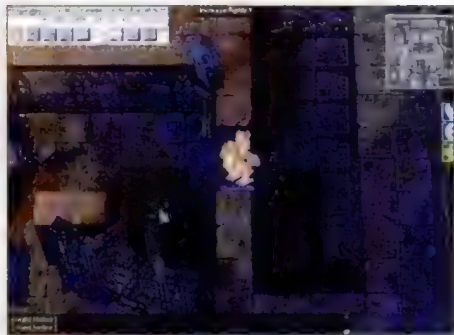
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# Rune Midgard Anthology - An Acolyte's Dream



By Jason Woo

While Tellerin is traveling along the dusty dunes of the Morocc Desert with Elihu, it's time we shift our gaze unto the eventual destination of our hero, Morocc, the Oasis City; the Jewel of the Desert. After two centuries of warfare between the 12 main desert tribes, Al-Khawad, the leader of the Khalid tribe and the first ruler of Morocc ultimately united the other 11 desert tribes to form the desert city. Founded thus on the basis of apathy and greed, Morocc is just as what it is known as in the underworld of Rune Midgard – the City of Thieves.

## The Morocc Unwanted...

"I say the die must have been loaded!" bellowed Granik. The burly Squad Leader of the Watch slammed his meaty fist on the table shattering both the wooden surface and several surrounding nerves. "Easy, Granik, it's just a game and surely you are not going to be surly over a few copper coins," soothed Vesuvan, a lean, mousy fellow that earned him the nickname of Rat with the Watch guards of Morocc.

In case you are wondering what's going on, Rat and Granik has just lost another fateful dice game with the other Watch personnel in their barracks after they have unloaded their swords and shields from a grueling 12 hour shift, thus losing a dice game after that is certainly not on Granik's agenda. However, these two aren't your run of the mill soldiers being paid meager wages to be on guard; rather the Morocc Watch is exclusively made up of Pronterean Crusaders and theirs' is a whole different kettle of fish when it comes to guard duties.

Uninitiated observers may question the need for the Pronterean presence in a city that is highly resistant to the theocratic capital's attempts to subjugate it under its religious rule under the cover of evangelism.

Doubts are largely based on the fact that although Morocc's people chiefly believed in a monotheistic religion which have served as the state's main belief backbone ever since the state's founding since Al-Khawad saw the benefits of an unifying religion, their idea of the divine however, differed from the doctrines of the Pronterean Church who considered them as heretics.

The move to install a Pronterean military outpost came about as a reactive move after a bungled Moroccan house break-in resulted in the death of a Pronterean noble. The then Pronterean Pontiff immediately saw it as a fit reason to persuade Tristan II (the then King of Prontera) to send a small crack squad into the desert city to establish military presence on the pretext of protecting Pronterean businessmen and other dignitaries. This allowed a legitimate ground for the impregnation of Morocc by the Prontera Church. However, the often-fatal skirmishes between the local religious groups and the Church Crusaders have put the Pronterean efforts to convert Morocc from a "horde of savages" to a "refined city" to a standstill.

Now years have passed and both Prontera and Morocc have seen the change in political power and policies. While Morocc has maintained the tough stand in upholding religious integrity, he has softened

the desert state's policy with the presence of a foreign army in his city and has even allowed inter-marriages between Prontereans and Moroccans – a move unprecedented since the formation of Morocc. Prontera on the other hand, under the rule of Tristan III and Holjin as the state's Chief Minister have turned their attention to threats looming further than Morocc and have therefore, put the desert city on hold.

The Crusaders' barracks in Morocc thus suffered due to the cuts in the royal budget to upkeep them and the soldiers soon spent their time of inactivity (which was a lot now) playing dice and amusing themselves with frivolities as bored soldiers always do. What made it worse was when Prontera soon made the Morocc outpost into a form of dumping ground for Crusaders and other military and support personnel with a shady past. Rat and Granik for example were thrown (though their letter of employment said "dispatched" but it was shrugged off as euphemism) to Morocc after being involved in dalliances with some Pronterean whores despite their elite military standings. The dumping ground concept also justified the costs of maintaining a foreign outpost that came under fire back in the Pronterean senate.

"I wonder if I can even get out of this arid cesspit," grumbled Granik, "look Rat, this place is the end all for our careers, and I knew I should have listened to my mother and become a merchant tending our family stall instead; I wished they would have just stripped us of our Crusader ranks and discharged us."

"Aye, Granik, such is the cruel fate for us...the Morocc Unwanted, we are needed to maintain a presence here but they chose to rest their elites and use us instead," laughed Rat, "but look on the bright side, I heard two more poor saps are going to join us today."

"...it's not just another Crusader this time, but a Priest is coming as well, 'cause dear old Sister Seline is relieving her duties as Barrack Healer to go back home and manage the Church's ministry in her old age."

"She was the only one with a clean slate amongst us, I am going to miss her," muttered Granik.

"Well, at least you are now faced with the task of warming up to our new brother-in-arms, Tamarig. I heard he was a high flying Captain in the Crusader Elite Corps until he gave another officer a bloodied nose, don't ask me why," revealed Rat, "the new Priest's Holieus, but he is different, seems that he requested to be posted here...crazy bloke."

"What makes somebody want to come to Morocc willingly? I've heard of this Holieus guy, it seems that he was almost made High Priest of the Pronterean Basilica after cleansing the dark city of Glast Heim but he rejected the offer. I wonder why..."

"Well, if we step in the great hall now, we can see them and what better moment than now since they have just arrived...then we can ask why." ■

To be continued...





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# 1 bird in hand is worth 2 in a bush?? 2 NOT!

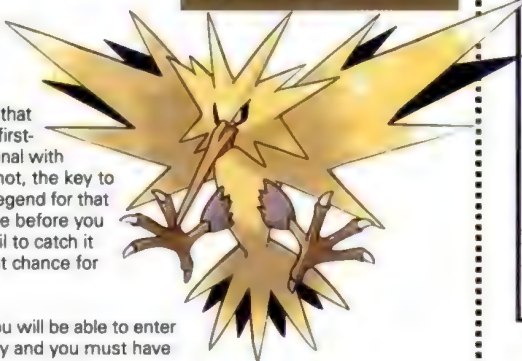
Time to throw away that passé statement out of the window, well, at least where **Pokemon FireRed** and **LeafGreen** are concerned. As you may well know by now, the latest twin Pokemon adventures are remakes of the Red and Blue versions of yore and what makes them cool are the presence of the legendary birds namely Moltres, Zapdos and Articuno. GameAxis tells you how to catch 'em all and be the ultimate bird badass.  
By Jason Woc

## ZAPDOS

Zapdos will be the first legendary bird that you will encounter and catch. For the first-time players, being upclose and personal with a legend can be displacing, but fear not, the key to capturing the pokemon or any other legend for that matter is to remember to always save before you start catching it. If not, should you fail to catch it or kill it accidentally, you will lose that chance for good.

About midway through your game, you will be able to enter a power station (east of Cerulean City and you must have learned Surf) where the bird of electricity resides.

Zapdos will be a Level 50 Electric and Flying type pokemon and has Thunder Wave that will paralyze your pokemon, thus making its capture difficult. Furthermore, Zapdos also has Drill Peck, a potentially deadly attack to sweep through your pocket menagerie. To that end, we recommend you bring along Ground-type Pokemon with ground-based attacks and lots of Ultra balls to make your task easier.



THUNDER STONE

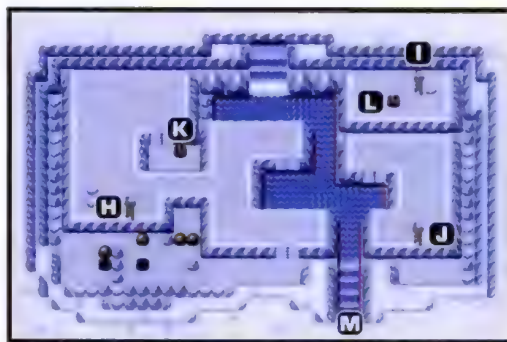


MAX POTION

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ULTRA BALL



## ARTICUNO

With Zapdos down, you are left with Articuno and Moltres. Surf on down to the lower Seafoam Islands and prepare to crawl through a long but by no means difficult cave dungeon (your pokemon should be averaging in their late 40s to 50 in levels).

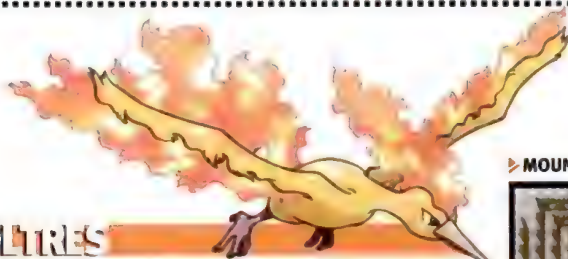
Before you start to embark on the trip to catch Articuno, remember to pack more Ice Heal as the Level 50 Ice and Flying type monster will likely have the chance to freeze your pokemon through its attacks and that is not good. You will also need to have one of your pokemon learn Strength in order to shove boulders in the Seafoam caves. This is because the boulders will help to block up the channels in the underground river for you to reach Articuno without being swept away by the currents. Electric pokemon with paralyzing skills will be useful and effective against Articuno due to it being a flying type so you accomplish more with just one blow.



## MOLTRES

By far, Moltres is the toughest of the three birds and rightfully so as you will need to traverse an entire overland and dungeon maps to get to it. Good things do not come easy but with luck and patience you can capture the Level 50, Fire and Flying type pokemon. First off, you will need pokemon that has learned Strength and Rock Smash so as to clear away the obstacles.

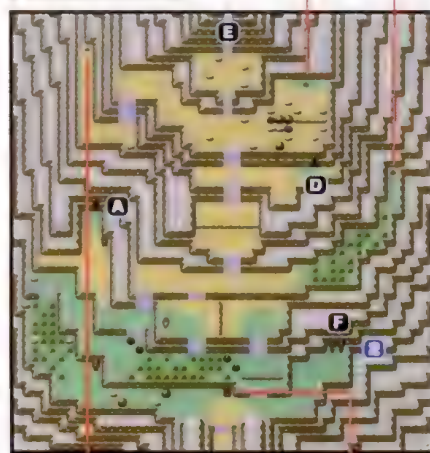
When you encounter Moltres, you can choose to try and put the bird to sleep and start to nibble away at its HP through the use of the opposing Water type (but do not use too strong an attack or you will kill it). Once Moltres' HP is in the red zone, start chucking Ultra balls and you will get him.



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ULTRA BALL

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## eX-D

Sometime in the future, society has become a much better place to live in. The world's energy crisis has been solved, environmental pollution is a thing of the past. On Tokyo's crowded highways, traffic jams and accidents are literally unheard of, thanks to the ubiquitous "AI cars" that drive themselves.

But when these supposedly safe AI cars begin to run amuck under mysterious circumstances, the organization known as ex-Driver (ex-D) is called in to fix the problem. Made up of people who still know the art of driving, it is up to these ex-Drivers in their antique gasoline-powered race cars to take out any runaway AI vehicle.

Lisa SAKAKINO and Lorna ENDOU pride themselves on being the two best ex-Drivers in their area until young Souichi SUGANO turns up. Lorna welcomes the new kid like her own brother, but for Lisa, if there's anything more annoying than being upstaged by a young upstart, it's having him for a partner!

From famed creator Kousuke FUJISHIMA (*Ah! My Goddess!*, *You're Under Arrest*, *Sakura Taisen*) comes eX-D, an action-packed futuristic OVA-series featuring some of the hottest car chases in an animated series.

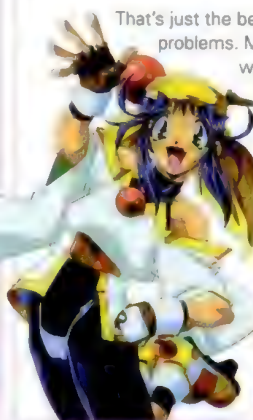
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All 9 episodes in 1 week!



## SABER MARIONETTE J AGAIN

All is well on the Terra II. The evil Gartlant Empire is defeated, and the planet welcomes its first female. For Otaru MAMIYA, it seems that he can finally settle down to a life of peace and quiet with his three Marionettes, until Faust's Saber Dolls turn up on his doorstep!

With life now back to normal, Faust's Dolls are having difficulties fitting into society. They can't control their strength, and are incapable of performing household chores. Faust thinks they need etiquette training, and who better to teach them than Otaru?



That's just the beginning of Otaru's problems. Marine, a new Marionette with a maiden-circuit awakens and ends up with Otaru and the others. But Otaru soon realizes that Marine is no ordinary Marionette, and for some reason, the President of New Texas wants her terminated at all costs.

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## AVENGER

The red colonized surface of Mars. Dome cities falling into dilapidation. A wasteland watched over by an ominous moon. Welcome to the twilight of humanity...

In this barren, apocalyptic landscape, much of the population has abandoned the outside world to live in huge dome cities. Limited resources and food mean that these dome cities and their respective warriors often end up in fiery and deadly battles.

Children aren't born anymore on Mars. Their place is now taken by pet androids known as "dolls" that are widely distributed amongst the colony.

When Leila, a warrior with a tragic past, meets the mysterious doll Nei, and Speedy, a "doll breeder", she embarks on journey with her companions to avenge her past. But the founders of Mars will stake everything they have to stop them, and prevent the dawning of a new era.

Avenger marks yet another anime collaboration between director Kouichi Mashimo and Koji Sawai, who previously worked together on *.hack//Legend of Twilight*. Once again, they have created a sci-fi masterpiece not to be missed.

Premieres 27 Dec  
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All 13 episodes in 1 week!



## GALAXY ANGEL Z

The girls from Angel Brigade are back for another hilarious romp across the galaxy!

Ranpha's invitation to a wrestling match brings her face to face in the ring with the strongest man in the universe; Milfeulle mistakenly eats a piece of Lost Technology and turns into a giant, while Mint becomes the village celebrity when she can't take off a costume she wears.

It's another season of side-splitting laughter as Transbaal's most famous (or infamous) squadron goes off in search of Lost Technology and, no doubt, more mischief!

Galaxy Angel Z is the second installment of the GA Project, and promises to bring you much joy and laughter during this holiday season.



Premieres 27 Dec  
Monday 11:30pm (SIN/PHIL)  
Sun 12:30am (UK/France)  
All 9 episodes in 1 week!



## eX-D THE MOVIE

Souichi, Lorna, and Lisa are in Los Angeles to represent Japan in the prestigious "ex-Driver World Race". But nothing seems to be going right for them. Upon their arrival, they encounter a runaway car and successfully stops it. For their trouble, the three of them get hauled off to the local police station while their cars are impounded.

The situation turns more sinister when the daughter of the US team's sponsor, Angela, goes missing. While trying to locate her, Souichi and the others uncover a link between an illegal betting syndicate and the World Race.

With their lives now in danger, the trio must race against time to save Angela and stop the betting syndicate from turning the world's biggest ex-Driver event into a farce.

Famed creator Kousuke FUJISHIMA's (*Ah! My Goddess!*, *You're Under Arrest*, *Sakura Taisen*) action-packed futuristic OVA-series features some of the hottest car chases in an animated series. Feast your eyes on the awesome, futuristically designed cars that will definitely take your breath away.

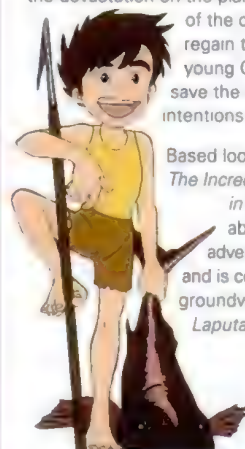
Premieres 31 Dec  
Thursday  
Sun 12:30am (UK/France)



## CONAN, THE BOY IN FUTURE

In the year 2008, a war between nations using ultra-magnetic weapons destroyed the world. The Earth is thrown off its axis, its five continents ripped apart and inundated by the ocean, and all civilization is wiped out, save for a handful of survivors.

Twenty years have passed since and time has healed the devastation on the planet. But when the rulers of the city-state Industria plan to regain these weapons, it's up to young Conan and his friends to save the world from their evil intentions.



Based loosely on Alexander Key's *The Incredible Tide*, *Conan, the Boy in Future* is an epic tale about friendship and adventure by Hayao MIYAZAKI, and is considered by many as the groundwork for his classic, *Laputa—Castle in the Sky*.

Premieres 1 & 2 Jan 2005  
Saturday  
Mon 12:30am (SIN/PHIL)  
All 26 episodes in 1 week!



# Hardware Zone

## Christmas Affair 2004

### GET READY to set your spirits high in your favourite year-end IT extravaganza!

Hardware Zone brings you a whole host of exciting activities with IT events for you to take part to win your own attractive "presents" this holiday season.

Then share the joy of giving as we promise you some of the best prices on IT and consumer electronics, gift-wrapping services and FREE popcorn and candy floss!

It's all happening at Hardware Zone Christmas Affair 2004, so see you there! Visit [www.hardwarezone.com/microsite/xmasaffairs2004](http://www.hardwarezone.com/microsite/xmasaffairs2004) for more details!

#### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

##### ABIT Over-Clocking Competition

ABIT returns for the 2nd year running with its massive popular overclocking competition with Hardware Zone as the official media.

##### HWZ Plug & Play Competition

DIY enthusiasts and Gamers join hands to challenge their knowledge of PC Components and gaming powers. For more info, check out

<http://www.hardwarezone.com/microsite/xmasaffairs2004/>

##### X-Box Tournament

For all you console jockeys, come join in the fray with the Xbox tournament. For more info, check out <http://www.hardwarezone.com/microsite/xmasaffairs2004/>

Venue: **Sim Lim Square**  
Time : **11am - 8pm**  
Date : **16 Dec - 19 Dec 2004**



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# How Do You Play?

by Nova\*

**It's not just about the games you play anymore, it's how you're playing the game.**

**It's** a whole different world out there with games and gamers, and I'll be one of the first to admit that I love it! I can't imagine a time where I didn't have any PC or Nintendo games to occupy myself. Actually I'm not even sure what I did with myself back then, but thank goodness for the gaming revolution that had come upon us now. We're spoiled for choice about consoles and games, and as technology progresses, that's probably not going to change (hooray!).

Just like with handwriting and color preferences, you can tell a little about a person by the things that they like, or in this case, the platforms and consoles that they choose to game on. So what does it all mean? Well, I'll break it down for you, so if you're thinking of getting a little something for your gamer girl this Christmas

“

Just like with handwriting and color preferences, you can tell a little about a person by the things that they like, or in this case, the platforms and consoles that they choose to game on. ”

(or for me), this might give you a few ideas.

## Pocket-Sized Power

There are two things in life that get me excited, and that's an addictive game to play and a great looking handbag. So when I can bring the two of them together with me wherever I go, then I'm extra happy! With all the consoles getting smaller and lighter, it's certainly a possibility for me, without having to risk getting a shoulder ache. And there are so many to choose from now that it's impossible to pick just one! If only I could have them all, then I'd never worry about being bored when I'm waiting for friends again.

One of the oldest and most established handheld consoles around has to be from Nintendo. Everyone remembers the days when it was the huge cartridges that you had to pound into the set to get it to work. The latest handheld consoles though, are probably the size of the cartridges before, and a lot sleeker to boot.

Through the years the GameBoy has gone through facelifts and makeovers, and the latest GameBoy Advance is a more compact version that lets you play every game ever made by Nintendo for the GameBoy series. So if you've got games that you've always loved from the hundreds and hundreds of games in the Nintendo catalogue, this is definitely the perfect choice for that gamer girl.

Want something sleeker and sexier (two words any girl always like to hear)? Then reach for the Nintendo DS, the latest addition to the family. Just like the GameBoy Advance, the DS is for pure gaming pleasure. With a dual screen, you'll be controlling your characters like never before. What a difference it makes to those RPG games, if you ask me, especially when I love RPG games so much! Girls who love minimal fuss in their designs and games galore, will love the DS.

So what more could I want from a handheld console? One that multi-tasks! We know women are always better at doing more than one thing at a time, and it's great when there are gadgets to help combine both business and pleasure. So when the world's leading phone manufacturer decided to dip its toes into the gaming world, I was a very happy girl. The Nokia N-Gage QD does everything and anything that you need it to. I can use it as a normal phone

— calls and messages to keep me in touch — and at the same time satisfy my gaming urges while I'm on the go. And it couldn't be a smarter idea because I always have my phone with me, and that means I'll always

have my handheld gaming with me at the same time. Nokia's launching game after game for their QD, and soon I won't have enough time to play them all!

Another one for multi-tasking is the Tapware Zodiac, which seems to do everything and anything that you could ever ask it to do. From music, to organizing your life, to playing your games, the Zodiac does it, and all of it on a Palm OS. So for the hardcore gamer, it might not be game enough to keep up with you.

Synonymous with the gaming world, Sony PlayStation 2 has cut out the excess and returned a slimmer, trimmer version of itself. Although it's not as portable as the Nintendos or N-Gages, it's become light enough to carry around in a tote bag when I'm heading out for a weekend of chalet fun, or just over to a friend's house for a girl's night in. The advantage it has is that it can link up to eight players at once, so us girls can have fun together.

## Heavy Weight Hitters

While I love carrying around games to play with me when I'm on the go, there's really nothing like watching your characters and storylines unfold on a big screen. And just how big a screen it unfolds on is up to you! Personally, I prefer one that's just big enough so I can see all the action even while I'm still curled up in bed.

This is where the big hitters of the industry come in. With games becoming more complex and animation more detailed, I like to have a console that can handle so much information without seizing up. Nothing spoils the swing of things more than having to restart a game every two minutes, and that's something that people who've released the Nintendo GameCube, the Xbox and the Sony Playstation 2 understand very well. And what I love about them so much is that you can invite friends over and have a wild night of gaming together. So with the serious gamer girl, this is the only choice.

How do you know just which console is perfect for your girl? Just take a look at her room. The Nintendo GameCube is cute and compact, and just like its other Nintendo counterparts, it plays all of the games that Nintendo has offered through the years, but packs a more powerful punch than the handheld ones with its tiny three inch disks. So if she likes things in order, and neatly at that, then the GameCube is perfect to keep everything in line.

But sometimes aesthetics aren't as important as performance, and that's where the Xbox fits in perfectly. Already the market leaders in everything computer-related, Microsoft are determined to do the same with the gaming world. The Xbox is no lightweight player with its in-built hard drive that can store every game you'll ever think of playing. And as social creatures, women love to mix around with others, so the Xbox Live lets me team up or compete with people all over the world.

Girls that like things sleek, just like me, will only want something with smooth lines and minimal fuss. With its sophisticated blue lights, the Sony PlayStation 2 feels like it's right at home in my room. As an RPG lover, I've completed several of the Final Fantasy series amid countless hours on the Sony console.

Even though I love to game on the go, I've also played my N-Gage so much that my fingers have gone numb, which is something that won't happen with the Xbox or PlayStation 2 because I won't have to hold up a screen to see what I'm doing.

So what's the perfect gift for a gamer girl? I know what I'd want — a handheld that I can play on the go, and one that's perfect for those at-home days. After all, aren't we worth it? ■



## THE GAMES TO CHECK OUT

Feeling a little lost about what you should be trying now? Here we give you the rundown on some of the games you should be considering.

### FOR THE XBOXER

#### Halo 2

Now really, if you haven't heard of this one yet, then you probably aren't into your Xbox nearly enough! Halo 2 has had the Xbox world holding its breath for its release and now that it's here, it's definitely a game that you should go out now and grab! This is especially an essential game if you were a fan of the first Halo, which was so revolutionary in defining the gaming industry, it just hasn't been the same since! So grab your controllers, and let the shooting begin!

#### Need for Speed Underground 2

The speed! The thrills! And oh, the spills. Instead of just racing around a circuit like the first Need for Speed, this one lets you explore all the city areas (in fact, you'll have to explore them to keep moving forward in the game) but also the beloved racing tracks are still there, and of course, who can resist those cars?

#### Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly Director's Cut

More the adventurous sort? And if you love horror too, then this is the perfect game for you. It's bigger and badder than the PS2 version that came out, so you'll be in for the ride of your life. The details have been made clearer, and in first person point of view, everything looks so real you'll be running for the door!

### FOR THE GAMECUBER

#### Viewtiful Joe 2

For the movie buffs, this game lets you immerse yourself in the world of movies, almost literally. While there aren't any big action heroes strutting around, Joe has to fight enemies that you'd find in almost any movie out there. Having saved his girlfriend in the first game, she's here to join him now as they fight through worlds like Zoom, or Slow (where everything is slow motion).

#### Metroid Prime 2 Echoes

If you're the sort that likes fighting on another planet, then be prepared for action and adventure on the planet Aether! This sequel lets you fight light and dark worlds as you investigate what happened to a team of space marines, and end up saving a race of aliens. Sounds like the stuff of fantastic proportions.

#### Mario Power Tennis

Who doesn't know Mario, his super powers and all his friends? In the latest from the Mario series is a tennis game that lets you beat all the characters on the court. Each character has their own special shots and powers, so you'll have to utilise them all to win. The cinematics are dazzling, and the animation make it fun to play and watch.

### FOR THE PLAYSTATIONER

#### Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

The GTA games have always been fun, and San Andreas is no different. They've managed to keep the frantic pace and level of detail that has set aside all the GTA games from any other out there. The missions are more interactive, and the city scapes will make you feel like you're right in California. And who would want to miss those celebrity cameos?

#### The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age

If you loved the movies, then this is an easy choice. As the third game in the LOTR series from EA, this gives you a different storyline from the first two (and probably just another excuse to keep in the LOTR mood till the DVD Director's Box Set comes out). It's still a visual treat for the eyes, and will keep any LOTR fans deliriously happy.

#### Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater

As part of the hugely successful Metal Gear Solid series, fans were a little disappointed with the second game. But this latest installment is worth giving it another shot. Here the game is set as a prequel to the first MGS, and so the backstory of Snake really comes alive. He's a different man from when we first encountered him, and it's worth it to see just how he became the man he is today.

### FOR THE N-GAGER

#### Colin McRae Rally 2005

Drive drive drive! Even if you're sitting on a bus, you'll still be able to satisfy the inner rally driver in you as you go through the world tour competing courses and winning prizes. Just be sure not to knock over the person sitting next to you in all your excitement.

#### The Sims

They've been around for years, and evolved from building a city, managing a zoo to now controlling the characters in a game. While the N-Gage version differs slightly where you only control one character, most of the same features you find in the PC version are still here. It's so addictive you'll be glad you can bring it around with you!

#### Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm

Okay, I loved the ads that were on TV for this, but the game can still hold its own. Considering that the N-Gage isn't the best of platforms to play on (small screen, small buttons...) this has some of the best graphics seen so far, and it's a game that will engage you from the start!

CONTEST 047

Contestants must SMS the 3 answers to us. Refer to pg. 47 for instructions

## X Marks the Spot

Nope, we have not read too much Treasure Island and we are certainly not closet pirates (whatever that means in this time and age) but we certainly do know a good booty when we see one. GameAxis December lets you have the chance to own a free copy of the Xbox's latest action game, X-Men Legends! Answer three X-tremely easy questions and find yourself earmarked for this attractive prize! (Closing date for last entry is 30th December 2004)

Q1) Who voices as Professor X in the game?

- A) James Earl Jones
- B) Ian McKellan
- C) Patrick Stewart

Q2) Which mutant power is Rogue best known for?

- A) Mutant healing factor
- B) Power absorption
- C) Telekinesis

Q3) Name the publisher of X-Men Legends.

- A) Electronic Arts
- B) Atari
- C) Activision







# SO HOT IT SIZZLES!

Over the Hari Raya weekend, while others were wolfing down spicy delicacies after a month long fasting season, some gamers gathered at the Planet Games Arena for an equally hot duel to see who was the champion for the hit Xbox game, Burnout 3. After a grueling selection heats with 30 participants on Saturday, five finalists met head-on in the finals on the following Sunday afternoon. Playing on the Road Rage mode, the finalists were pressed to score as many "takedowns" as possible that required them to crash AI controlled racing cars. We have some of images of the intense racing action here.



## So, who set the roads on fire?

After an hour odd of crashing cars and flipping metal, Sin Leong Seng emerged the **Burnout 3** champ, managing 38 takedowns in less than 10 minutes! Congratulations and here are the rest of the racing kings and their scores!

Players	Takedown Scores
Enoch Tan	38
Addien	33
Ezekiel Azib	22
Sunny Oke	20

Besides console battles, Planet Games is also home to LAN competitions that feature **Warhammer 40K**, **Call of Duty** and **FIFA 2005** happening every weekend! So, hop on down to the Science Center this weekend and check out the action!





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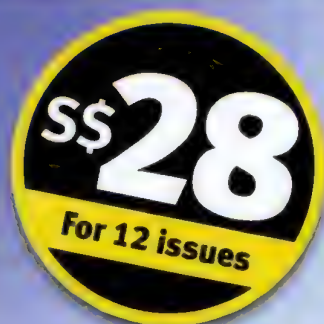
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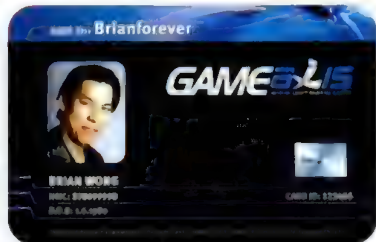


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December Issue Cover

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DECEMBER 2004

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Want to take part in this month's contests?  
Just follow the easy steps below!

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X Marks the Spot (Pg. 43)	GaX 047	79800

Here's how you can send in your entry:

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3	GaX 047 lamnuts@gameaxis.com a b c	4	Phone number: 79800
	Options Back		Search Back
	Enter your answers		Send SMS to contest number

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1. Please do not leave spaces in your Email.
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4. Closing date for all contests is 30th December 2004.
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Tampines Mall, United Square, West Mall

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180 Ang Mo Kio Ave 8

NTU Computer Society - NTU

NUS Students' Computing Club - NUS

Oscar's Food Mall - Anchor Point

Planet E+G - Raffles City

Poh Soon Leong - Blk 69 Ayer Rajah Crescent

Simply Toys - Far East Plaza

SingPost Post Office -

Bedok Central, Kent Ridge, Killiney Road, Robinson Road

Singapore Post Centre

Soundspa by Audiosports - 376B River Valley Road

Temasek Poly Student Union - Tampines Ave 1

The Star Factory -

Plaza Singapura, Suntec City, Tiong Bahru Plaza

X Square - NTUC Lifestyle World Downtown East

Zone X Centres -

Chinatown Point, Eastpoint Mall, Hougang Mall, Lot 1 Shopping

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# Photo Hunt

There are 5 missing items in each set. Can you spot them?

ORIGINAL

SPOT 'EM

01

Leisure  
Suit Larry:  
Magna  
Cum Laude  
(PC)



02

Star Ocean:  
Till the End  
of Time  
(PS2)



03

Rome:  
Total War  
(PC)



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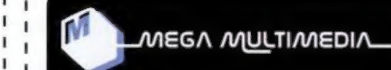


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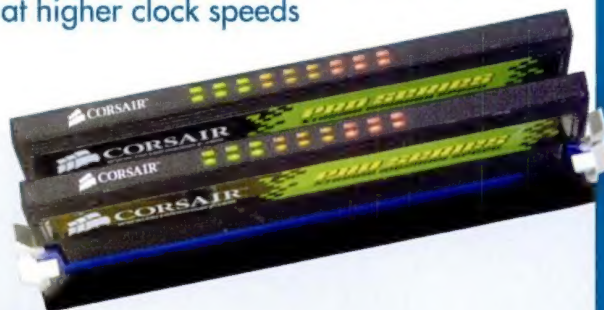
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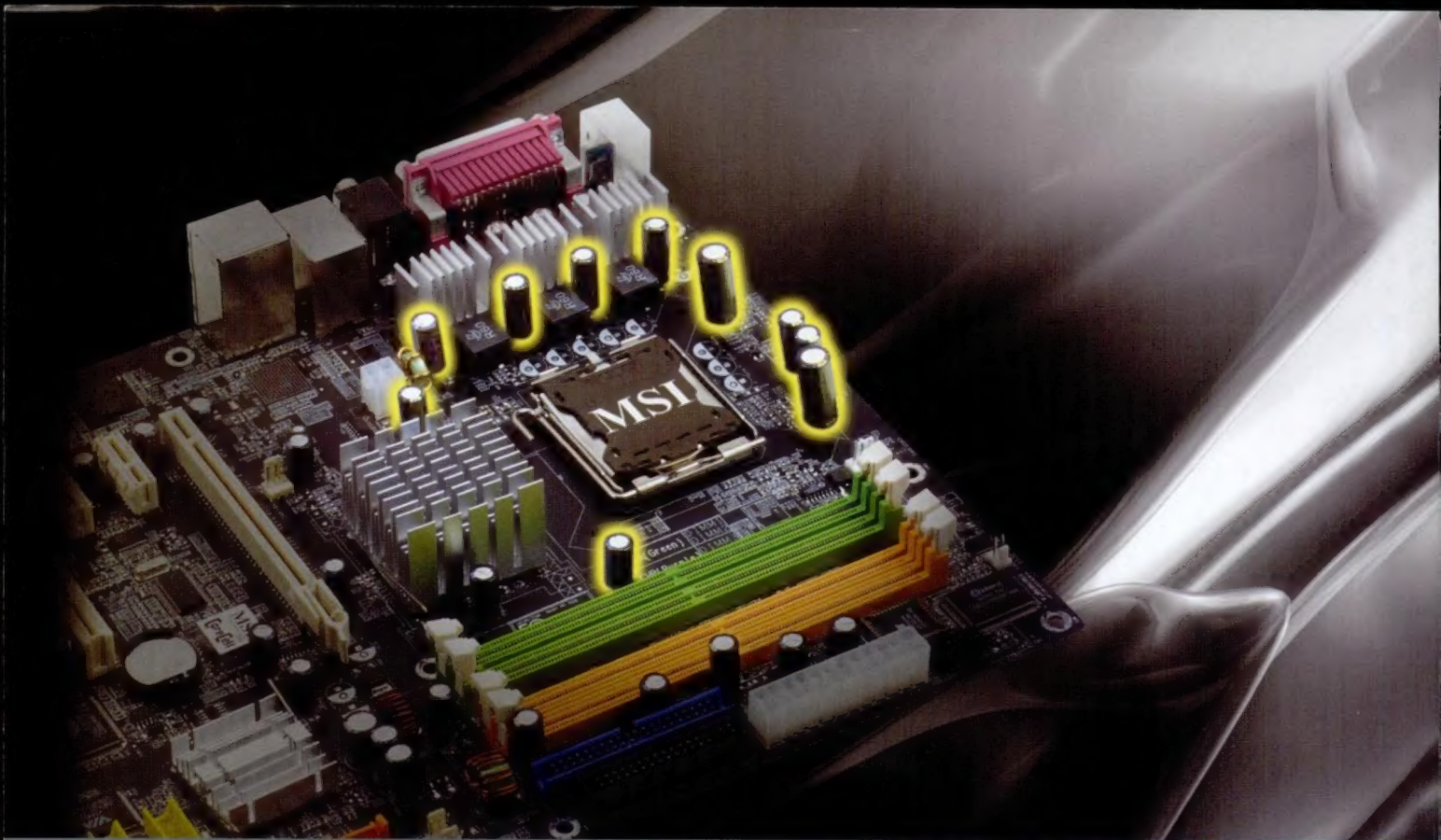
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